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# THE MARKETS OF PARIS

(LE VENTRE DE PARIS.)

## BY ÉMILE ZOLA.

AUTHOR OF "L'ASSOMMOIR," "THE CONQUEST OF PLASSANS," "THE ABBE'S TEMPTATION," "HELENE; OR, UNE PAGE D'AMOUR," "THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY," ETC.

**TRANSLATED BY JOHN STIRLING.**

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**T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS, Philadelphia, Pa.**

# THE MARKETS OF PARIS.

also published as "La Belle Lisa"

(LE VENTRE DE PARIS.)

## BY ÉMILE ZOLA.

AUTHOR OF "L'ASSOMMOIR," "THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY," "HELENE," "THE CONQUEST OF PLASSANS," "THE ABBE'S TEMPTATION," ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY JOHN STIRLING.

35

*"THE MARKETS OF PARIS" is a remarkable work, and is the one which Zola calls his very best novel, and of which he is far more proud than of any others in his Rougon-Macquart series—prouder than of "L'Assommoir." It must have been in his early manhood, when poor and friendless, he lived among the people, that much of the information which makes these pages so startlingly vivid, was acquired. How many mornings, long before dawn, must he have visited these markets—how many hours and days must he have spent there, to have mastered the habits, manners and ways of these people, who are a class by themselves, and of whom we do not lose sight, from the beginning to the end of the book. He introduces us to the Parisian charcutier—the cook shop—and in La belle Lisa, the mistress of the establishment, we find the sister of Gervaise, the woman who stirred the depths of our hearts with pity, in "L'Assommoir." In truth "THE MARKETS OF PARIS" stands as utterly alone in modern French literature, as it is distinct and apart, from any other work even by Zola himself. It is a book for all to read.*

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**The Conquest of Plassans; or, La Conquéte De Plassans.** *By Émile Zola*, author of "L'Assommoir," "Hélène," "The Abbé's Temptation."

"THE CONQUEST OF PLASSANS" has in it two extraordinary characters, absolutely original in conception and execution. These are the Abbé Faujas and his mother, who come, as the title of the volume indicates, to bring under their control the provincial town of Plassans. These two figures pervade the book. The Abbé being the incarnation of ambition and the spirit of domination. We see that he has but one end in view. The mother of the Abbé is equally remarkable—unselfish and devoted. Zola's command of language in it is absolutely marvellous, and he uses it so accurately that the reader has before him the individual, the act or the scene, the hour of the day or night, the very light and atmosphere which were present to the mind and imagination of the Author. He makes us perceive the smell of vice, not the perfume; his nude figures are those of the anatomical table, which do not inspire the slightest immoral thought. There is not one of his books, not even the crudest, that does not leave in the soul, pure, firm and immutable, the aversion or scorn for the base passions of which he treats.

**L'Assommoir.** A Novel. *By Émile Zola*, the great French novelist. Over One Hundred Thousand Copies have already been sold in Paris of "L'Assommoir."

"L'ASSOMMOIR" is one of the greatest and most extraordinary works ever written, full of nature and of art, dramatic, narrative, and pictorial. In it, vice is never made attractive, but "Zola" paints it in all its hideous reality, so that it may tend to a moral end, for in it he unquestionably calls "a spade a spade." "L'Assommoir" is without a rival. The translator, John Stirling, has done his work in the most able manner.

**The Rougon-Macquart Family; or, La Fortune des Rougon.** *By Émile Zola*, author of "L'Assommoir," "Hélène," "The Abbé's Temptation."

In "THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY" Zola depicts people as he sees them, but not through jaundiced eyes; he sets down their passions and their weaknesses, their petty jealousies, and small rivalries; his heart is as tender as his pen is forcible, while his love of Nature is apparent in every chapter he writes; his descriptions of scenery and flowers are as minute as his dissection of the human heart. No reader, however careless, can peruse unmoved the pathetic story of Silvère and Miette, which is as absolutely tender and touching as anything known in modern fiction, and no one can deny that Zola has painted his pictures in colors which can never fade.

**The Abbé's Temptation; or, La Faute de L'Abbé Mouret.** A Love Story. *By Émile Zola*, author of "L'Assommoir," "Hélène," etc.

"THE ABBÉ'S TEMPTATION," by Émile Zola, writes one of the most noted literary editors in New York, to John Stirling, the translator, "is the sweetest love story I ever read, and is a great book, for there is much in the work that is lovely and pathetic. It is a work of marvellous ability, not immoral in any sense, while it teaches a great lesson. As Zola depicts the innocent love and purity of the unhappy Abbé, one can scarce believe that he, who wrote 'L'Assommoir,' can be the author of this sweet, pathetic love story."

**Hélène, a Love Episode; or, Une Page D'Amour.** *By Émile Zola*, author of "L'Assommoir," "The Abbé's Temptation; or, La Faute de L'Abbé Mouret."

"HÉLÈNE" is admirably written, is full of powerful and life-like delineations of character, and is the great sensation in Paris, for the book is admirably written by a truly great artist. The characters and scenes in "Hélène" are well conceived and well executed, and it is impossible to deny the author's great skill, for every reader will acknowledge "Zola's" great power in "Hélène." Besides the story, there are many pages devoted to rapturous descriptions of Paris at sunrise, at noonday, at sunset, and at night. Zola has made his name famous, and he will find plenty of readers for all he writes.

# TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

IT is almost impossible for any translator to find an English word, which will accurately convey the complex meaning intended by Monsieur Zola when he selected the title of "LE VENTRE DE PARIS" for the remarkable work which we now present to our readers under the name of "THE MARKETS OF PARIS;" a work which Zola calls his very best novel, and of which he is far more proud than of any others in his Rougon-Macquart series—prouder than of "L'Assommoir."

It must have been in his early manhood, when poor and friendless, he lived among the people, that much of the information which makes these pages so startlingly vivid, was acquired. How many mornings, long before dawn, must he have visited these markets—how many hours and days

must he have spent there, to have mastered the habits, manners and ways of the people, who are a class by themselves, and of whom we do not lose sight, from the beginning to the end of the book.

As Monsieur Zola maintains, that all that exists in Nature, is worthy of being reproduced by the true artist—he, in this profound study of the manner in which a great city is fed, has omitted not one detail, or smoothed over one repulsive incident. He takes us from the bloom, and the beauty of the flower and fruit markets, to the fish stands, where he points out to us the exquisite workmanship of the scales on the inhabitants of the great deep. He describes the vegetables as if they were rare tropical plants; and then introduces us to the cellars under the vast Halles, where the reserved stock of fish is kept, and where poultry is fed and fattened for the tables of the wealthy.

He introduces us to the Parisian *charcutier*—the cook shop—where pork is served in every imaginable form; and in La belle Lisa, the mistress of the establishment, we find the sister of Gervaise, the woman who stirred the depths of our hearts

with pity, in "L'Assommoir." Both women are daughters of the shrewd Uncle Macquart, who figures in the "Conquest of Plassans," and in the initial volume of the series.

The gossiping women are inimitably depicted. The busy old maid, who picks up her breakfast and her dinner, in return for some choice bit of scandal imparted to the market women, is a finished picture of its kind.

The Italian, from whose recent work we have previously quoted, says of this novel:

"The story of the disgusting and iniquitous plebeian gossip, which ends in ruining a good man, and which revolves in that strange theatre, the Halles, full of colors and odors—among these enormous and impudent fish-vendors—amid that strange network of rival shopkeepers and republican plots—has always seemed to me one of the happiest inventions of French genius."

And in truth "Le Ventre de Paris" stands as utterly alone in modern French literature, as it is distinct and apart, from any other work even by Zola himself. The reader follows the fortunes of

the tender-hearted, generous Florent from the sad beginning to the disastrous end, growing hot with rage, at the manner in which he is sacrificed, and burning with contempt, at the baseness of the people by whom he is surrounded.

That the American public will find as much pleasure in the perusal of the work, as the translator has had, in the performance of his agreeable task, is the strong hope of

JOHN STIRLING.

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# THE MARKETS OF PARIS.

(LE VENTRE DE PARIS.)

FROM THE FRENCH OF

## EMÍLE ZOLA.

AUTHOR OF "L'ASSOMMOIR," "THE ROUGON-MACQUART FAMILY; OR, LA FORTUNE DES ROUGON," "HELENE; OR, UNE PAGE D'AMOUR," "THE ABBE'S TEMPTATION; OR, LA FAUTE DE L'ABBE MOURET," "THE CONQUEST OF PLASSANS; OR, LA CONQUETE DE PLASSANS."

TRANSLATED BY JOHN STIRLING.

## CHAPTER I.

### DESPAIR AND HUNGER.

THROUGH the profound silence and loneliness of the deserted avenue, the wagons of the market gardeners rolled slowly toward Paris; the measured rhythm of their wheels, re-echoed from the façades of the sleeping houses on either side, behind the confused outlines of their sheltering trees. A cart loaded with cabbages, and another with peas, at the Pont de Neuilly joined eight more, piled with carrots and turnips coming down from Nanterre; the horses moved on slowly by themselves, with heads well down. The drivers slept under the striped covering,

holding the reins lightly in their hands. A gas-jet would flash down occasionally on the shining nails of a stout shoe, or the blue sleeve of a blouse, light up the red carrots and white turnips, and bring out the vivid green of the peas and the cabbages.

From all the roads came the dull, continuous sound of wheels, lulling the black town to a deeper sleep as they bore onward through the silence and darkness, this vast supply of food.

Balthasar—the horse belonging to Madame François—a stout, heavy animal—was at the head of the line. He walked on at a steady pace, though half asleep, gently moving his ears, when all at once, at the head of la Rue de Longchamps, he started, and stood still, firmly planted on his four feet. The other animals did the same, and the whole line came to a halt, amid the oaths of the awakened wagoners.

Madame François, leaning against a board among her vegetables, looked out, but saw nothing, for the scanty light of the small lantern fell only on Balthasar's shining flanks.

"Well, Mother! Why don't you get on?" called out one of the men, getting upon his knees among the turnips. "It is only some drunken man."

She leaned out of her wagon, and saw on the right, almost under the feet of the horse, a black mass lying across the road.

"I don't propose to drive over any one," she said, as she clambered over the wheel.

It was a man lying face downwards in the dust. He seemed to be of a most extraordinary length—as thin as a withered branch. It was a miracle that Balthasar had not broken him in two with one blow of his foot. Madame François thought the man dead. She knelt down by his side, took his hand, and felt that it was warm.

"Poor fellow!" she said, gently.

But the wagoners were growing impatient, and the one who had previously spoken now said, in his thick voice:

"Give him a push, Mother. He is pretty full, that's all the trouble! Roll him over into the gutter!"

The man opened his eyes. He looked at Madame François in a wild sort of way, but did not move. She, too, thought him drunk.

"You must not lie there," she said. "You will be run over. Where are you going?"

"I do not know," he replied, in a low voice. Then he made an effort, and added:

"I was going into the city. I fell, and I do not know—"

She saw him more distinctly now. He was indeed most deplorable in appearance, with his black and threadbare coat and pantaloons clinging closely to his emaciated form. His cap, also of black cloth, pulled down over his brows, showed two bright, brown eyes of singular sweetness in a weary, anxious face. Madame François thought him too thin to be a drinking man.

"And where were you going after you get into Paris?" she asked.

He did not instantly reply; he was evidently annoyed at this interrogatory. He hesitated, and then said, slowly:

"I was going to the Halles."

He struggled to his feet with infinite difficulty, and made an effort to continue his way.

The market-woman saw him stagger, and grasp the side of the wagon.

"You are tired?"

"Yes, very tired," he replied.

Then she adopted a rough, authoritative tone, and said:

"Get into the wagon at once! You are making us all lose our time. I am going to the Halles, and I will take you with my vegetables;" and as he refused, she lifted him with her stout, strong arms, and threw him among her turnips and carrots.

"Don't be a fool, my good man! Don't I tell you that I am going to the Halles? Go to sleep, and I will wake you when we get there."

She climbed to her seat, shook her reins a little, as she gathered them up, and Balthasar calmly resumed his slow march, the other wagons following. The reverberations began anew, and drivers fell asleep once more. The one who had spoken, stretched himself out and muttered:

"I wonder if we are to pick up all the drunken men. If that is your idea, Mother, you will have enough to do."

The wagons rolled on, the horses going as they pleased. The man whom Madame François had rescued, lay at full length among the vegetables, half covered by the spreading carrot-tops. He clutched the side of the wagon with

weak, loose fingers, lest he should be thrown out by a sudden jolt, and looked out at the two interminable lines of gas-lights, which afar off melted into other lights.

"I am from Nanterre. I am called Madame François," said the market-woman, after a long silence. "Since my old man died, I go myself every morning to the Halles. It is hard work, but I must grin and bear it, I suppose. And you?"

"My name is Florent, and I come from a great distance," answered the unknown, with some hesitation. "I beg your pardon, but I am so very tired that it hurts me to speak."

He was evidently determined not to talk, and she said no more, but let the lines fall a little on Balthasar's back, as the animal knew every step of the way. Florent, with his eyes riveted on the lights of Paris, thought of the history he hoped to conceal. He had escaped from Cayenne, where he had been sent after these dark December days. He had wandered for two years in Guyana, eager to return to his native land, but afraid of the Imperial police. Could it be that at last he saw the dear city for which he had so long pined? He would hide himself there and live peaceably; the police would have no reason to suspect him; to them he was as good as dead. He thought of his arrival at Havre with fifteen francs tied up in the corner of his handkerchief.

At Rouen he left the railroad, as he had but thirty sous remaining; and at Vernon bought some bread with his last two sous. After that he could remember nothing.

He thought he must have slept several hours in a ditch. A Gendarme had asked for his papers. He remembered all this in a vague sort of way. His head was dizzy, for he had come from Vernon without a mouthful, clutching at times at the leaves of the hedges, and chewing them in despair; but he walked on in spite of cramps, which nearly cut him in two, drawn on by that image of Paris waiting for him behind the distant horizon.

When he reached Courbevoie, the night was very dark. Paris, like a streak of light falling athwart the blackness, appeared to him severe and retreating. As he crossed the Pont de Neuilly, he leaned over the parapet and saw the Seine rolling below in inky blackness between the dark banks. From that point his progress was upward. The avenue seemed absolutely endless to him. The hundred of leagues he had toiled over became as nothing —it was this last part of the road which drove him to desperation; never would he reach that summit crowned by those lights. The avenue with its tall trees and lower houses—its gray pavements streaked with shadows—the dark gaps made by the cross streets—the silence and the blackness—the yellow flaming gas-lights at regular distances being the only suggestion of life, weighed him down. Florent could not go on. The avenue lengthened as he walked, and Paris was still farther off. It seemed to him that the very gas-lights were dancing to and fro. He tottered and fell—an inert mass—on the sidewalk.

And now he was lying on this soft, fresh verdure. He raised his head a little to see a wider extent of the

luminous mist that rose above the distant roofs. He was going on without any exertion of his own, and his only pain now arose from the pangs of hunger, which had again awakened within him, and were gnawing like wild animals. The strong and penetrating odor of the carrots troubled him. He turned over on his face, and pressed his stomach against these piles of food, hoping to still his cravings. And behind were nine more huge wagons, with their mountains of cabbages and peas, their piles of artichokes and lettuce, celery and leeks. He wondered if they would fall upon him and stifle him with their abundance, while he lay dying of hunger.

There was a sudden stop—a great noise of voices. They had reached the barrier and the Custom House people were examining the wagons.

Florent entered Paris among the carrots—sound asleep.

"Hallo! my good man," cried Madame François, and as he did not move, she reached over and shook him.

He struggled up—he was no longer hungry—he was dizzy and faint. The woman made him get down, and then said:

"You will help me unload, won't you?"

He helped her, but a stout man, with a cane and a felt hat, with a metal badge on his left breast, became angry, and knocked his cane against the pavement.

"Come, come—make haste! that will never do. You have four mêtres, haven't you?"

He handed a paper to Madame François, who drew from a linen bag the necessary sous, and the man ordered

the wagon to move on a little, and then turned his grumbling to the next. The market-woman took Balthasar by the bridle, and pushed him back until the wheels ran up to the sidewalk. She proceeded to mark her four mêtres on the pavement with small bundles of straw, then lifted the board at the back, and begged Florent to hand her out the vegetables bunch by bunch. She arranged them methodically and with marvellous deftness, so that the turnip, carrot and beet tops framed her little square with a mass of verdure, and the whole looked in the shadow like a rich carpet. When Florent handed her a huge bundle of parsley, the last thing in the wagon, she asked him yet one other service.

"Would you be so kind as to watch my merchandise while I put up my horse? I have only two steps to go—just round the corner to the Compas d'Or in la Rue Montorgueil."

He assured her that she might make her mind easy—he had as lief stay there as not, until her return. The fact was that he preferred to stay still—for hunger began to gnaw at his vitals the moment he moved. He sat down and leaned against a pile of cabbages, telling her she might be as long as she pleased.

His head was dizzy, and he did not feel quite certain where he was. As soon as September comes, the early morning is dark, and lanterns were moving about, held in invisible hands. He was at the end of a wide street with which he was perfectly unfamiliar; ten steps away it was all thick darkness, and he could see no farther than

the merchandise over which he was keeping guard. Confused gray masses occupied the centre of the street, and he heard the sound of cattle moving and breathing loud. A quiet imperative call—the fall of a piece of wood on an iron chain on the stone pavement, the dull thud of a wagon backed up against the curbstone—filled the air with vague suggestions of a formidable awakening near at hand—an awakening with which all this darkness already shivered.

Florent, turning his head, saw on the other side of the pile of cabbages, a man sound asleep, with his head on a basket of prunes; nearer still was a lad of twelve curled up between two piles of chiccory. But he fixed his eyes in dull surprise on two gigantic covered sheds on either side the street—whose roofs seemed to expand as he gazed. His mind slightly wandered and he began to dream of an endless palace, light and airy, brilliantly illuminated. He saw the slender pillars and the overhanging roof. He tried to count the succession of halls crowded with people. He turned his head aside, restless and uneasy, and suddenly beheld the illuminated clock-face of Saint-Eustache, and the gray mass of the church. He was excessively astonished at finding himself in this locality.

Madame François now appeared. She was disputing with a man who carried a sack on his shoulders, and wished to buy her carrots at one sou a bunch.

"But there is no sense in it, Lacaille! You will sell them again for four or five sous to the Parisians; you know that as well as I do! You can have them for two sous, if you say so." And as the man went away she said:

"That is really too much—he won't find any carrots at a sou—but he is tipsy—there is no use in talking about him. He will be back soon enough, too!"

She was speaking to Florent, and then she took a seat by his side.

"Tell me," she said, "if you have been a long time away from Paris? For, if you have, this market is new to you. The Halles have been built not more than five years. All this building on your right is devoted to flowers and fruits. Next comes the fish and the poultry, and beyond, the vegetables, cheese, butter, etc. There are six buildings on this side of the street, and on the other four—tripe and meat and all that sort of thing. It is an enormous place, and hideously cold in winter. They say that there are two more divisions to be built, and a number of houses to be torn down, all the way from the wheat market. You know where that is?"

"No," answered Florent, "I am quite a stranger. But what is the name of this wide street, just before us?"

"It is a new street—la Rue du Pont Neuf, which runs from the Seine. There is la Rue Montmartre, and there is la Rue Montorgueil."

She rose as she spoke, seeing a woman leaning over her turnips.

"Good-morning, Mother Chantemesse," she said, in a friendly way.

Florent looked at la Rue Montorgueil. It was there that he had been arrested by armed police on the night of the 4th of December. He was walking along the street,

about two o'clock, feeling a certain contempt for all these soldiers that the Elysée had sent forth, when all at once, these soldiers swept the streets with a discharge of musketry. He himself fell at the corner of la Rue Vivienne; he knew no more, the crowd trampled upon him, and the noise was deafening. When all was again silent, he tried to rise to his feet again. The body of a young girl lay across him. She wore a rose-colored hat, and her shawl had slipped off, showing a muslin waist all tucks and inserting. Two musket-balls had gone through her throat, and when he lifted the poor thing, his hands were drenched with blood. Then he rushed away, mad with horror, and wandered until night, seeing nothing but this young girl with her pale face, and her great blue eyes wide open, in which he read a great surprise—surprise at Death coming to her so suddenly.

He was very timid, and although thirty, rarely looked into a woman's face, and yet this one would haunt him all the rest of his life. That evening, without knowing how he got there, he found himself at a wine-shop in la Rue Montorgueil. The men were all talking of erecting some barricades. He went with them, and assisted them in tearing up the paving-stones, and then seated himself, for he was weary with the excitement of the day. He had not even a knife in his belt, and his head was bare; he bade his friends tell him if the soldiers came, as he was ready to do his share of fighting. About eleven o'clock, he fell asleep; but his dreams were haunted by those blue eyes, and the two round holes in that white throat. When he

awoke, he was in the grasp of four armed men; his friends had taken flight. The police wished to strangle him at once when they saw that he had blood on his hands—it was the blood of the blue-eyed girl.

Florent, absorbed in these recollections, watched the illuminated dial in the tower of Saint-Eustache, but he saw neither figures nor hands. It was nearly four o'clock. The Halles was not yet well astir. Madame Chantemesse still bargained with Madame François over the price of the turnips, and Florent recalled what he had seen in that very spot—five dead bodies had lain there—five poor fellows who had been taken at a barricade in la Rue Grenéta. He had not been shot down at the same time and place, merely because the men who took him prisoner had swords instead of guns. He was taken to a station near by, where his description was filed.

"Hands covered with blood when arrested. Very dangerous."

He was dragged from station to station; at each the same words were written down. He was hand-cuffed and treated as if he were a madman. At one place some tipsy soldiers wished to shoot him, but fortunately orders came that all prisoners should be carried before the Prefect. The next day he was placed in a casemate of the Fort de Bicêtre. That day he suffered from hunger for the first time in his life, and eagerly snatched the mouthfuls of food which were thrown into him, as to a wild beast.

When he appeared before the Judge, without any testimony in his favor, or counsel to defend him, he was

accused of belonging to a secret society; and when he swore that this was not true, the Judge, with a portentous frown, drew out the ominous bit of paper.

"Hands covered with blood when arrested. Very dangerous."

This was enough. He was tried and condemned at the end of six weeks. In January a jailor came to him in the middle of the night, and took him down to a court-yard where there were at least four hundred other prisoners.

And in another hour the first detachment of these were sent into exile, wearing hand-cuffs, and marching between two files of soldiers with loaded guns. They crossed the Pont d'Austerlitz, following the line of the Boulevards, and reached the Havre station. It was a gay and festive night of the Carnival—the windows of all the restaurants on the Boulevard were blazing with lights; and near la Rue Vivienne, just where the dead girl had lain, Florent saw some masqued women in a carriage, who were much disgusted at being detained by all these "forçats," "who would never get past."

From Paris to Havre, the prisoners had not a mouthful of bread nor a drop of water. No rations had been distributed before they started. They were forgotten. They had nothing to eat for thirty-six hours—not until they were on board the frigate "Canada."

As he looked back, he could not remember that he had had enough to eat once since then. He was nothing but skin and bone, and now he returned to Paris, to find her rolling in abundance. He had come back to her borne

upon a cart heaped high with vegetables. That Carnival night on which he had left Paris had apparently lasted until now—for seven long years—and it seemed to him that all the glitter and prodigality of that night, as he remembered it, had blossomed out into this enormous market.

Mother Chantemesse decided to buy twelve bunches of turnips. She held them in her apron, and still stood talking. When she at last departed, Madame François went back and took a seat by Florent, saying:

"That poor old woman is over seventy. I was a child when she bought turnips of my father, and she has not a relative in the world, nor a soul to do a thing for her, except a girl she has picked up somewhere. The old woman gets along somehow though, and even makes her forty sous per day. But, dear me, I wonder how she can stay all the time in these Paris streets; they would kill me."

And as Florent did not speak, she said:

"You have relations here, I suppose?"

He did not seem to hear her. He was uneasy and suspicious. His head was full of stories of police agents and detectives watching at all the corners of the streets—of women selling the secrets they tore from certain poor devils. He looked at Madame François' kindly face, framed in a black and yellow handkerchief tied under her chin. She was apparently about thirty-five, rather large, and masculine, but handsome, from her abundant health and out-of-doors life, softened by the womanly tenderness which spoke from out her black eyes.

She went on, not in the least offended by the silence of her companion.

"I have a nephew in Paris, but he has turned out badly. I suppose your parents will be surprised to see you. Ah! it is a nice thing to go home when one is sure of a welcome, is it not?"

She did not take her eyes from him as she spoke. She was compassionating his excessive thinness, but detecting a gentleman under his shabby clothing, she did not dare to offer him the piece of silver which was burning her hand.

At last she said, timidly:

"If in the meantime you should happen to want anything—"

But he refused with uneasy pride; he said he had all he needed, and that he knew where to go. She seemed quite pleased, and said over and over again, as if to reassure herself:

"Well, then, you have only to wait for daylight!"

A great bell above Florent's head now began to ring, with a slow and regular sound. Carts were rolling up. The shouts of the drivers and the snapping of their whips, the grinding of the gravel, beneath the wheels and the feet of the animals, momentarily increased. The wagons could now advance only a rod or two at a time, so great was the crowd. All along la Rue du Pont Neuf the carts stood against the sidewalk and were unloading—the horses with their heads close together. Florent took especial interest in an enormous load of cabbages on which shone a gas-light, bringing out the green of the large

leaves looking like wrinkled velvet. A little peasant girl of sixteen, wearing a blue jacket and close-fitting cap, stood upright in the cart among the cabbages, and threw them one by one to some person standing in the shadow below.

The girl was sometimes almost hidden among the verdure. Then her pretty, rosy face peeped out again. She laughed, and the cabbages recommenced their flight between the gas-light and Florent. He counted them mechanically and was sorry when the cart was empty.

The vegetables were so arranged on the pavement that the venders could circulate among them. The lights from the glancing lanterns shone on a bundle of artichokes, on the delicate green of lettuce, the deep orange of the carrots and the ivory whiteness of turnips. All these brilliant colors were repeated again and again, until the whole ground was like a delicious mosaic. The crowd was rapidly increasing; customers were moving in every direction. A loud voice called:

"Nice chiccory! fresh chiccory!"

The proprietors of the vegetable stalls—women with their white caps, and fichus knotted loosely, and with their skirts pinned up carefully—were making their purchases, which porters were carrying to the stalls. And there was much noisy disputing over a sou. Florent was infinitely astonished at the calmness of these hale countrywomen, with their sunburned faces and Madras handkerchiefs, in the presence of those voluble Parisians.

Behind him was the fruit market—rows of low, shallow

baskets stood covered with cloth or straw, while an odor of over-ripe plums filled the air. A low, sweet voice compelled him to look around. He saw a charmingly pretty woman, small and dark, bargaining with a man.

"Well, then, Marcel, will you sell them for a hundred sous?"

The man made no reply, and the young woman waited fully five minutes, when she said:

"A hundred sous for this basket, and four francs for the other, make nine that I owe you?"

Another silence.

"What, then, am I to give you?"

"Ten francs—just as I told you! And Jules—what have you done with him, La Sarriette?"

The woman laughed, and said as she showed a handful of money:

"Bless your heart, Jules is asleep! He vows that men were not made to work."

She paid him, and took the two baskets into the fruit market, which had just opened. Through its covered streets a crowd was constantly passing, while at the Pointe Saint-Eustache, the bakers and proprietors of other small shops were just taking down their shutters, and their windows, lighted by gas, made little red spots among the gray houses. Florent looked to the left, way down la Rue Montorgueil, and saw the glossy brown loaves in the window, and fancied that he could even smell them. It was now half-past four.

All this time Madame François was getting rid of her

merchandise, and had now nothing left, but some bunches of carrots, when Lacaille appeared again with his sack.

"Will you take a sou for them now?" he asked.

"I was sure you would be back," answered the market-woman, quietly. "You can have all that are left—only seventeen bunches."

"That makes seventeen sous."

"No; thirty-four."

They finally agreed on twenty-five, as Madame François was in a hurry to get away, and Lacaille went off quite triumphant with his carrots in his sack.

"Old miser!" she said to Florent. "He always waits until the last sound of the bell to buy his four sous' worth of stuff. Ah, these Parisians! They bargain their eyes out for two liards, and then go and drink up every sou they own, at the first wine-shop."

When Madame François spoke of Paris, she was full of irony and contempt. She seemed to regard it as a most contemptible, as well as ridiculous city, in which she would not consent to spend a night.

"And now," she said, with a sigh of relief, as she again seated herself by Florent; "now I can go."

Florent looked away, for he had committed a theft. He had picked up a carrot and held it concealed in his hand. The parsley and celery emitted such fragrance that his hunger became unendurable.

"I am going away," repeated Madame François.

She was interested in this stranger, and was certain that he was suffering. She made him new proffers of

assistance, but he refused them all with a certain sharpness in his voice. He rose to his feet to prove that he was quite able to go on his way, and as she turned away her head, he put a piece of the carrot in his mouth. He held it there a moment, as she looked him once more in the face, with several new questions. He nodded, and eat the carrot slowly.

The market-woman turned to depart, when a full voice called out:

"Good-morning, Madame François!"

It was a thin fellow who spoke—a thin fellow with a big head and big bones, a delicate nose, and small bright eyes. He wore a hat of black felt, shabby and out of shape. He was closely buttoned up in an immense overcoat, once light chestnut in tint, on which the rain had left huge greenish blotches. Round-shouldered, and trembling in a nervous way that was probably habitual, he stood with his legs a little apart, his stout-laced shoes and blue stockings fully exposed to view by his very short pantaloons.

"Good-morning, Monsieur Claude," replied the market-woman, gayly. "I waited for you Monday, and as you did not come, I took care of your canvas, and fastened it up on my wall in my bedroom."

"You are very kind, Madame Fraçnois. I will come some day and finish my sketch; Monday it was impossible. Has your great prune tree put out all its leaves yet?"

"Oh! yes, indeed."

"Well, then, I will put it in the corner of my picture; it will do well there next the poultry-house. I have been

thinking about it all the week. The vegetables are superb this morning. I got up early only to see the effect of the sunrise on these cabbages."

"I am off!" said the market-woman. "I hope to see you soon, Monsieur Claude."

She hesitated, and then added, presenting Florent to the young painter:

"Look here! This gentleman has just come back from a long journey, and feels like a stranger in Paris. Give him some help, can't you?"

And she walked off quite content in leaving the two men together. Claude looked at Florent with interest. His long, oval face, with its uncertain expression, struck him as quite original. The market-woman's introduction was quite enough, and with the ease of a person accustomed to all sorts of odd adventures and rencontres, he said quietly:

"I will go with you; but where are you going?"

Florent was not altogether pleased, but one question had been on his lips for the last hour, and he determined to risk it. He hastily said:

"Does la Rue Pirouette still exist?"

"To be sure," answered the painter. "And a curious corner of old Paris it is, too, with its crooked turns and pot-bellied houses. I made a sketch there that was not very bad. When you come to my studio I will show it to you. Is that where you want to go?"

Florent, quite comforted by hearing that la Rue Pirouette still existed, said no, that he was not going there. All

his distrust was awakened by Claude's persistence, who answered, gayly:

"Well, never mind! let us go all the same to la Rue Pirouette. Come, it is only two steps off."

There was nothing to be said, and Florent was compelled to yield, and they strode off. Along the sidewalk were gigantic piles of cauliflowers arranged with surprising regularity. Their tender green among the coarser outer leaves gave them the look of flowers, or of a succession of bridal bouquets. Claude stopped before them with a little exclamation of admiration.

A gas-light still burned on the corner of la Rue Pirouette. The houses were precisely as the painter had described them—pot-bellied, and elbowing each other, although some few were quite the contrary, and looked as if they were about to fall on their noses. The gas fell full on one which was very white and fresh, as if it had recently been done up, while others were tottering and covered with green mould. Florent stood still at the corner of la Rue Mondétour, in front of the house next to the corner on the left. The three floors looked as if all the inhabitants were still sound asleep; the small white curtains were drawn close, while high up in an attic window, a light came and went. But the shop on the lower floor seemed to cause Florent an extraordinary emotion; it was a place where only cooked vegetables were sold. At the back bright tins glittered, and on the counter stood chiccory and spinach smoking in small earthen dishes, where they were piled up in smooth

hillocks. This sight seemed to astonish Florent; he looked up at the name Godebœuf, on a red sign, and stood aghast, with the air of a man to whom some great misfortune has arrived.

Meanwhile the attic window was opened; a little old woman leaned out, looked at the sky, then at the Halles, and then into the distance.

"Hallo! Mademoiselle Saget is early to-day," said Claude, turning toward his companion:

"I once had an aunt living in that house, which is a perfect nest for scandal. Ah! the Mehudens are moving. I see their lights on the second floor."

Florent was about to ask a question, but suddenly changed his mind, for he did not feel quite easy each time he looked the little artist full in the face. He therefore listened, while the other talked of the Mehudens. They were fishwomen—the oldest was superb—the youngest looked like one of Murillo's Virgins, calm and fair, among her carp and her eels. And then the little painter added, angrily, that Murillo was not such a wonderful artist after all. He suddenly stood still in the middle of the street.

"Well!" he asked, "do you want to go to the very end?"

"I don't care where I go," said Florent. "Lead on, I will follow."

As they turned out of la Rue Pirouette, a voice called Claude from the depths of a wine-shop on the corner. Claude went in, dragging Florent with him. The

shutters were taken down from only one window, the gas was burning, and the air close and stifling; a dirty towel and the cards of the previous evening lay forgotten on the table, fluttering in the breeze which came in at the open door, and mingled with the stale odor of wine and tobacco.

The proprietor, Lebigre, was waiting on his customers in his shirt-sleeves, and with his big face white with sleep. Men were drinking at the counter—coughing and spitting—swallowing raw brandy with the hope of arousing themselves to their day's work. Florent saw Lacaille —the man who had bargained for the carrots, and was now discussing with a comrade the price of potatoes. When he had emptied his glass, he went into a small room at the back of the shop with Lebigre.

"What will you take?" said Claude to Florent. The little painter had shaken hands, and he came in with the young man who had called him—a handsome young fellow of about twenty-two, wearing a moustache on his otherwise well-shaven face, which smiled from under the wide brim of a hat well dusted with chalk.

Claude called him Alexander, tapped him familiarly on the arm, and asked when they should go to Charentoneau, and they said something about a jolly boating party on which they had been together, and of a delicious rabbit-stew they had enjoyed in the evening.

"Well! what will you take?" repeated Claude.

Florent looked at the counter in some doubt. At one end were bowls of punch and hot wine kept hot over gas. He said he would take something warm. Monsieur

Lebigre handed over the counter three glasses of punch. A basketful of hot rolls stood on the counter; but as the other two men did not take any, Florent refrained, although he felt the hot punch fall into his empty stomach like so much melted lead. It was Alexander who paid.

"A good fellow is this Alexander," said Claude, when they left the wine-shop. "He is excellent company in the country. I never saw such a gymnast; his muscles are something extraordinary. He has posed for me naked several times in the open air. Now, shall we take a turn through the Halles?"

Florent followed him. At the end of la Rue Rambuteau a bright light announced the coming of the day. The roar of the crowd in the market was constantly increasing. The two men turned into one of these covered streets, between the fish and the poultry market. Florent lifted his eyes to the high roof, with its cross timbers of shining wood, and then, as he looked about him, it seemed to him that he was in some big town with its distinct Quartiers—its squares and its streets—all put under a huge shed out of some whim on a rainy day. There was a perfect forest of pillars, and innumerable trellises of iron. Some of the divisions were as yet unoccupied, although the gas was lighted throughout. Women were hurrying through the fish market, and laying out their wares on the marble tables.

The hurry and noise was spreading from the poorer quarters where the cabbages were bought and sold at four o'clock in the morning—to the stalls where pheasants and chickens were sold to the wealthy at eight o'clock.

All along the sidewalks were established petty market gardeners, from the outskirts of the city, with their bunches of vegetables and dainty baskets of fruit.

Carts were constantly driving in under the vaulted roof. Two of these stood in such a way that Florent was obliged to wait for them to move before he could pass, and he saw the men take down heavy bags which were wet and smelt of sea-moss, and contained shell-fish, as did huge boxes with cross-bars of wood, which were brought by the railroads daily from the ocean. Then came large yellow wagons with colored lanterns, laden with cheese, eggs and butter.

Claude was delighted with all this tumult. He was transfixed by an effect of light on a group of men in blouses. At last they struggled through all this confusion, and found themselves in a quieter spot filled with delicious fragrance. They were among cut flowers. Women were seated on either side of them, with their square baskets full of roses, violets and marguerites. A lighted candle brought out a perfect melody of color—the pale sweetness of the marguerites, and the vivid crimson of the dahlias, and the flesh-like tints of the roses.

There is nothing sweeter or more spring-like than this odor of flowers coming to one after the smell of fish and the pestilential odor of cheese and butter.

Claude and Florent loitered along among the flowers, and stopped with some curiosity before the women who sold bundles of ferns and of vine leaves methodically bound together—twenty-five in a bundle. Then they

turned into another quiet street, which was almost deserted, where their steps resounded as in a church. They found there, harnessed to a wagon about as large as a wheelbarrow, the smallest donkey that was ever seen. The creature began to bray as soon as the two men came in sight, and with such prolonged vigor that the vast roof of the Halles fairly reverberated. Horses neighed in response, and these sounds were repeated again and again, until lost in the distance.

Opposite was the Rue Berger, with its wide-open stalls heaped up with baskets and with fruit. Near by stood a fiacre, in which they caught a glimpse of a lady lounging in the corner, while her driver swore at the carts, in which he found himself hopelessly entangled.

"It is Cinderella coming home without her slipper," said Claude, with a smile.

The two men talked a little as they lounged through the market. Claude, with his hands in his pocket, told how much he enjoyed seeing all this abundance which poured into Paris every morning. He said he never came without his imagination being filled with wonderful pictures, of which he had yet begun only one. He had made Marjolin and Cadine sit for him, but the deuce of it all was, that these vegetables, fruits, meat and fish, were mighty hard things to paint!

Florent listened, while the pangs of hunger were devouring him, to this enthusiasm. It was plain that Claude at this moment did not think of these things as eatable; he liked them for their beauty and color.

Claude suddenly stopped and tightened, in a way that was common with him, the wide leather belt he wore under his old overcoat, and said, with a knowing air:

"Sometimes my only breakfast is through my eyes, and when I have neglected to dine the evening before, this sort of breakfast does not agree with me."

He then went on to describe a supper for which a friend had once paid at Baratte's. They had had oysters, fish and game; but Baratte had come to grief. He and the old Marché des Innocents were done for together. This vast Halles was a very poor substitute for the past. Florent did not know whether the artist most regretted the loss of what was picturesque, or the good cheer that once was to be got at Baratte's. Claude was now launched; he delivered a fiery vituperation of all the old masters; his cabbages, he declared, were better than all their dingy rags. He ended by accusing himself of miserable mannerism in the study he had made of la Rue Pirouette.

"I tell you," he said, "a man should paint what he sees, and as he sees it. Now, look there!" he continued. "Is not that a better picture than their consumptive saints?"

Women were selling coffee and soup. A small crowd of customers had gathered around a large kettle of cabbage soup which smoked on a tiny brasier. The woman, armed with a long ladle, first put into a yellow bowl thin slices of bread, which she took from a basket covered with a napkin, and then filled up the bowl with soup. There were clean market-gardeners in blouses; dirty porters with

their shoulders soiled by the burthens they had carried, poor devils in rags; in short, all sorts of persons, eating their breakfast, and scalding themselves with the hot soup. The painter was delighted, and half shut his eyes to compose his picture. But the smell of the cabbage soup was terribly strong. Florent turned away his head—the sight of the appetizing bowls made him dizzy, and even Claude was affected.

He tightened his belt with a smile, but he was a little vexed, and walked on, saying as he did so, in a low voice, to Florent:

"It is very funny, but did you ever notice that there are always plenty of people ready to pay for a drink for you? But no one ever thinks of such a thing as paying for your food!"

It was now dawn. At the end of la Rue de la Cossonnerie, the houses in the Boulevard Sébastopol were black, and above their slated roofs stretched a line of light. Claude was looking up with his eyes fixed on a roof over his head.

"What are you looking for?" asked Florent.

"For that devil of a Marjolin," answered the painter. "I need him for a study. He is certainly up there, unless he has seen fit to spend the night in a cellar with the poultry."

And he went on to say how his friend Marjolin always lived about the market, of which he knew every nook and corner—he and that little scamp of a Cadine whom Mother Chantemesse had picked up one night in the old

Marché des Innocents. He was a splendid great fellow, with a ruddy beard which would have gladdened the heart of Rubens: while she was a tiny creature, with a quaint little face and bright eyes under a wilderness of curly hair.

Claude, as he talked, increased his pace; he led his companion to the Pointe Saint-Eustache, where he dropped on a bench near the omnibus station. A ray of light suffused the eastern sky, which overhead was sombre and gray; and the air had such aromatic freshness that Florent could fancy himself on a hillside in the country. Claude pointed out to him the secret of this odor. Thyme and lavender, sweet marjoram and basil were all around him, done up in bundles ready for sale.

The illuminated dial of Saint-Eustache was slowly fading, while in the wine-shops the gas-burners were being extinguished one by one. And Florent watched the Halles emerge from the shadow, stretching their endless length before him, and when the daylight brought them entirely into view, they struck him as a wonderful machine, the result of modern ingenuity—a gigantic cauldron made of wood, metal and glass.

Claude stood upon a bench and insisted on his companion admiring the light as it streamed over the vegetables, bringing out all their rich tints and varied shades of green.

The cabbages alone were a study for an artist. Enormous white cabbages, hard and compact, as if made of metal; curled cabbages with leaves like bronze; red cabbages with streaks of rich purple and crimson. In the distance the opening to la Rue Rambuteau was barred by

a barricade of orange-colored pumpkins, and the glossy reddish brown of a basket of onions, the vivid red of a pile of tomatoes, the yellowish tone of a quantity of cucumbers, the sombre violet of the egg-plants, delighted the heart of the artist, who called "these vegetables simply sublime." Meanwhile the crowd of white caps and blue blouses filled the narrow paths; porters lifted their burthens high above their heads. There was a soldier and several nuns buying cabbages, and stout cooks were peering about in search of bargains, and the carts were still roaring up the street.

"Is it not magnificent?" cried Claude.

But Florent was in an agony of pain. He looked up at Saint-Eustache, of which he saw the sides, like sepia tracings against the blue sky. He saw the beautiful windows, the bell-tower and the slated roof. He caught the gleam of gold-lettered signs in la Rue Montmartre, down which workmen in white blouses, with their tools under their arms, were hurrying.

Claude was stil stanlding on the bench. Suddenly he beheld in the crowd a head he knew.

"Ah! Marjolin! Cadine!" he cried.

His voice was lost in the uproar, and he jumped down to follow his friends, but, suddenly remembering Florent, he said, quickly:

"You will find me in the Impasse des Bourdonnais—my name is on the door, Claude Lantier. Come and see my sketch of 'la Rue Pirouette.'"

He disappeared. He did not know Florent's name—

he left him, as he had taken him, on the curbstone, having explained his artistic preferences.

Florent was now alone. At first he was glad of it. Since Madame François had picked him up in the Avenue de Neuilly he had been simply half-awake, and yet in such pain that he had hardly known what he was doing. At last he was free, and he tried to rid himself of the intolerable and heavy dream, of mountains of food, by which he felt himself pursued. But his head had a strangely empty feeling. He was a little afraid withal, for he could now be seen. His clothing was lamentable. He buttoned up his coat, brushed his pantaloons, fearing that their very dust would betray whence he came. He was seated by the side of several other poor devils on a bench which was kept in view by several policemen, who were walking up and down. Florent fancied that they knew him, and were about to arrest him. He felt a mad desire to run, but he did not dare to move, nor had he the smallest idea where he should go; but he felt that he could no longer endure this cold examination of these men, and left the bench, not hurriedly, but as quietly as possible, feeling in imagination rough hands laid upon his collar.

He had but one desire now, and that was to get away from "Les Halles;" but the streets were all so crowded that he did not know which to take. Wherever he turned, his path was encumbered by the vegetables, while the pavement was slippery with the leaves of artichokes and lettuce.

He heard the noise from the Halles. It was like a

great central organ furiously beating—throwing the blood of life through all its veins.

He went into a quiet covered street, at the left, which he had previously noticed as especially quiet; but it was now as noisy and bustling as the others. He went to the very end, where he found cages of living poultry, and baskets of dressed fowls. On the opposite sidewalk were carts discharging whole calves and calves in quarters, sheep and quarters of beef. Butchers with white aprons were weighing and cutting up the meat. He looked at them with wild, hungry eyes. He passed the stall where tripe was sold, and the feet and heads of calves, with the brains delicately placed in flat baskets—sweetbreads and kidneys. Florent, with sullen rage in his heart, turned away from this place. His teeth chattered, and he was afraid he should fall on the ground, and be picked up and carried off by the police. He stopped and leaned against a tree, with his eyes closed, and a strange buzzing in his ears. The raw carrot he had swallowed griped his stomach, and the glass of punch intoxicated him. He was drunk with despair, fatigue and hunger. A great fire burned within his breast. He pressed his two hands upon it, as if to stop a hole through which his life was ebbing. The sidewalk upheaved under his feet when he tried once more to walk. He staggered, and finally, in a stupor, allowed himself to be pushed first in one direction and then in another.

He was ready now to beg, and angry with himself at his foolish pride in rejecting the alms offered by Madame

François, and he was vexed also that he had not asked the painter to give him something; for now there was no one to whom he could turn. He was left there like a lost dog. He looked toward the Halles once more; they were now bright with the blaze of the rising sun—the zinc roof reflected the light. Blinded and dizzy, he wondered if he were to die in the face of all this plenty. Hot tears stood in his eyes.

Two women now passed him—a little old woman and a taller one.

"And you come yourself to market, Mademoiselle Saget?" asked the taller and younger of the two.

"Oh! Madame Lecœur, my marketing is nothing. You know what one woman lives on is nothing! I wanted a little cauliflower, but they are so dear. And butter—how much do they ask for it to-day?"

"Thirty-four sous. I have some very good. Suppose you try some."

"I don't know. I have a little on hand."

Florent made a great effort, and followed these women. He remembered that he had heard the smaller one mentioned by Claude, and said to himself that he would speak to her as soon as she was alone.

"And your niece?" asked Mademoiselle Saget.

"La Sarriette has her own way," answered Madame Lecœur, sharply. "The day will come that she will turn to me for a mouthful of bread, but she will ask in vain!"

"You were very good to her always. She ought to make money, for fruits are very advantageous this year. And your brother-in-law?"

"Oh! he—"

Madame Lecœur pinched up her lips, and seemed determined to say no more.

"Always the same, I suppose," continued Mademoiselle Saget, "but he is a good man after all! Though it is a pity that he wastes his money in such a way!"

"How does he waste his money?" answered Madame Lecœur, fiercely. "He is a miser, I tell you, and a thief, too. He would let me starve rather than give me a five-franc piece. He knows perfectly well that I have made no money this year, while he has sold all the poultry he could get hold of; but he has never once offered me the smallest assistance; not that I would have accepted it, you understand."

"Ah! here he comes," said Mademoiselle Saget, lowering her voice.

The two women turned and looked at a man who was crossing the street.

"I am in a hurry," said Madame Lecœur, "I left my stall without any one; and, besides, I do not wish to speak to him."

Florent looked around mechanically. He saw a small, squarely-built man, with rather a happy face, holding under each arm a fat goose. He started, looked again, and started in pursuit of this man. When he reached him, he touched him on his shoulder.

"Gavard!" he said.

The other looked up in some surprise at this long, black figure, which accosted him. Then he uttered a stifled exclamation:

"You!" he cried; "you here!"

He nearly let his fat geese slip from his grasp; but seeing his sister and Mademoiselle Saget watching this meeting with evident curiosity, he walked on, saying:

"Do not stop here; there are too many eyes and ears."

They found a quiet corner, and talked. Florent said he had been to la Rue Pirouette. Gavard thought this very queer; he laughed, and said that Quenu had moved, and opened his pork-shop in la Rue Rambuteau, opposite the Halles. He was still more amused when he discovered that Florent had been all the morning with Claude Lantier, a droll sort of fellow, who was, moreover, the nephew of Madame Quenu. He would show Florent where the pork-shop was. But when Gavard found that his friend had returned to Paris, with forged papers, he shook his head with an air of grave disapproval. He insisted on going a little in front, as they walked, that they might not attract attention. He passed his stall and hung up his two fat geese; and still followed by Florent, he crossed la Rue Rambuteau, where he pointed to a showy pork-shop, past which the army of street-sweepers were just moving, with regular strokes of their brooms.

The pork-shop was almost on the corner of la Rue Pirouette; it was a pleasure to look at, being so bright and clean. The sign, on which was the name *Quenu-Gradelle*, in long gilt letters on a pale blue ground, was worthy of being covered with glass. Cupids sported amid wreaths of sausages and piles of cutlets. The window

was a mass of green. Each plate was surrounded by parsley and celery.

In the background were jars of pickles and pots of mustard. There were hams and tongues and pigs' feet, black puddings and force-meat balls, sausages and pâtés, hams in jelly, and large pâtés; there were truffles and mushrooms; there were boxes of tunny fish and sardines; a box of rich Neufchatel cheeses in one corner, and in the other, fat little snails lay among parsley. On the rear shelf of this chapel, consecrated to the stomach, between two tall bouquets of purple gladioli, was a square aquarium, wherein two gold fish were disporting.

Florent shivered. He saw a woman standing in the doorway. She gave another touch of beauty to all this solid comfort. She was a beautiful woman, full but not too stout, in all the maturity of her thirty years. She had just risen, and her shining hair was smooth and massive. Her flesh had that transparent whiteness—that delicacy common to the skin of persons who live on buttermilk and fat meat. She was grave and serious in expression. Her stiff linen collar lay smooth about her throat. Her white sleeves came up to her elbows, and her white apron down nearly to her shoes, leaving only the extreme edge of her black dress to be seen, and its tight-fitting waist. She stood bathed in the sunshine, drinking in the beauty of the morning. She had a look of great kindliness.

"That is your brother's wife, your sister-in-law, Lisa," said Gavard to Florent.

He nodded to the woman as he spoke. Then turned into

an alley, taking the most preposterous precautions—although the shop was empty—and was evidently delighted to be concerned in an adventure, which he regarded as somewhat compromising.

"Wait!" he said; "I am going to see if your brother is alone. You must not go in until I clap my hands."

He pushed open a door in the alley, but when Florent heard his brother's voice, he could restrain himself no longer, but rushed in. Quenu, who adored him, advanced with open arms. They embraced each other as if they had been children.

"Ah!" stammered Quenu, "and I thought you dead! Only just now, I was saying to Lisa that poor Florent—"

He stopped and put his head into the shop.

"Lisa! Lisa!"

Then turning to a little girl in the corner, he said:

"Pauline, go ask your mother to come here."

But the child did not move. She was a magnificent little creature, about five years old, and looking very much like her mother. She held tight in her plump little arms, an enormous yellow cat, as if afraid that this shabby newcomer would steal her treasure.

Lisa came with slow and stately step.

"It is Florent—my brother," said Quenu.

She called him "Monsieur," and was very cordial. She examined him frankly from head to foot, but evinced no unkind surprise. Her lips were, however, slightly compressed, but they finally parted in a smile as she witnessed her husband's ecstasy of delight. But he suddenly became

grave, seeming to realize Florent's careworn aspect and his excessive thinness.

"Ah! my poor, dear boy," he said, "you have not grown fat. Now look at me!"

He was fat, certainly—too fat for his thirty years. He seemed to be bursting out of his shirt and the great white apron, in which he was swathed. His well-shorn face had gained a certain resemblance to that of a pig, in the flesh of which animals his hands were busy all day long. Florent would hardly have recognized him. He seated himself and looked from his brother to Lisa, and then to little Pauline. They were all in riotous health, and gazed at him with all the astonishment of stout persons at excessive thinness. The very cat winked her yellow eyes and examined him with evident distrust.

"Will you wait a while for breakfast?" asked Quenu, "or will you have something now? Our hour is ten."

Florent thought of the terrible night he had passed; of his agony, and of the incessant sight of the abundance of which he could not partake, and said, in a low voice, with a sweet smile:

"I am very hungry."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MISER'S TREASURE.

FLORENT had just begun the study of law in Paris, when his mother died. She lived at Vigan dans la Gard.

She had married a second time a Normand, a Quenu of Yoetot, whom a sub-Prefect had brought, and forgotten in the South. He remained at the Prefecture, finding the country charming, the wine good, and the women kind. An indigestion three years after his marriage, carried him off, and he left to his wife a stout boy much like himself; but not a sou. The mother was then paying with great difficulty her son Florent's way in college; he was the child of her first marriage, and gave her great satisfaction. He was very industrious and ambitious, and carried off all the prizes. It was on him that she concentrated all her tenderness, and all her hopes. Perhaps she had preferred her first husband; perhaps Quenu, whose good humor had first charmed her, was too much absorbed in himself. She at all events made up her mind that her youngest boy would never amount to much. She contented herself with sending him to school, to an old woman in the neighborhood, where the child learned little or nothing. The two brothers grew up far from each other, and almost as strangers. When Florent arrived at Vigan

his mother was buried. She had concealed her illness as long as possible, that she might not disturb him at his studies. He found little Quenu, then about twelve, sobbing in the kitchen. A neighbor told him all the melancholy details. His mother had literally killed herself with work that her son might pursue his studies. To a little shop where she sold ribbons, she added other toil, which kept her up early and late. The fixed idea of seeing Florent a lawyer, rendered her hard, exacting and pitiless toward herself and others. Little Quenu went about with ragged clothing, and never dared help himself at table. His mother always cut his bread for him, and cut it very thin, too. It was to this régime that she had succumbed with immense despair, at leaving her task incomplete.

This history made a terrible impression on the tender nature of Florent. His tears choked him. He took his young brother in his arms and kissed him, as if to assure him of the affection with which he should always regard him. He looked at the little fellow's shoes in holes, jacket in rags, and at his generally neglected air, and told him that he was to go with him, and that they would be happy together. The next day he found that he had not money enough to return to Paris, but was determined not to remain at Vigan. He therefore gladly sold out the little ribbon shop, which enabled him to pay his mother's small debts. And the neighbor offered him five hundred francs for the linen and entire household possessions of the deceased. The neighbor made a good bargain, but the

young man thanked him with tears in his eyes, and that very evening dressed his brother in new garments. He was compelled to give up his law studies for the time; and on his return to Paris, established himself with Quenu in la Rue Royer-Collard in a large room, which he furnished with two iron beds, a wardrobe and four chairs. He regarded his brother as his child, and at first, when he came home in the evenings, attempted to teach the child; but the lessons did no good. The boy absolutely refused to learn anything, sobbed and wished his mother were back, and he could play in the streets all day long. Florent in despair gave up the lessons, consoled him and promised an indefinite vacation; and to excuse his weakness in his own eyes, he said to himself that he had taken the child, only to make him happy. This was Florent's rule of conduct now; to sacrifice everything that Quenu might be happy. The elder brother absolutely adored the younger, basked in his smiles and laughed when he laughed, and enjoyed the boy's growing up, with no care or fear for the future. Florent had a few scholars, but the task of teaching wore heavily upon him, he grew thinner and thinner each day, while Quenu was as plump as a partridge, and barely knew how to read and write; but with a good nature which filled with gayety that old room in la Rue Royer-Collard. Years went on. Florent, who had inherited from his mother the spirit of self-sacrifice, cherished Quenu as if he had been a great indolent girl. He even avoided imposing on him any of their small household cares. It was he who went out for their

provisions—he who cooked them—and he who kept the room clean.

"It takes me out of myself," said Florent, who was very gloomy at times. When he came in at night, body and mind utterly weary, hating the children he had been teaching, he was touched by the joy of this big boy, whom he generally found playing top in the centre of the floor. Quenu laughed at his awkwardness in making an omelette, and at the solemnity with which he prepared the pot-au-feu. When the lamp was out, and Florent lay in his bed, he was at times very sad. He was very anxious to resume his law studies, and was trying to arrange his time, so that he could follow the course prescribed by the Faculty. When he at last succeeded in doing this, he was very happy. But a low fever, which kept him ten days in the house, was such a drain on his small resources, and made him so very anxious, that he gave up all idea of finishing his studies. His child was growing up, and was to be established. He succeeded in obtaining a position as Professor in a boarding school in la Rue de l'Estrapade, with a salary of eighteen hundred francs, which to him was a fortune. With economy, he could put money aside to establish Quenu, whom, at eighteen, he treated as if he were a sister or a daughter; for whom a dowry was to be laid aside.

During his brother's short illness, Quenu had made his own little reflections, and one morning announced that he wished to work—that he was old enough to earn his own bread. Florent was profoundly touched.

Opposite their room, on the other side of the street, was a clock-maker whom the boy had found especial fascination in watching—seeing him bending over his little table, handling delicate tools, and toiling patiently all day long. Quenu, therefore, declared that this was what he liked. But at the end of a fortnight, he was in despair, wept bitter tears, and said he could never learn the trade, nor remember "the thousand nonsensical things in a watch."

He preferred to be a locksmith ; but this he found too fatiguing. In two years he had tried ten trades. Florent agreed to all he said, and would not allow him to stick to anything he did not like. Unfortunately, this beautiful devotion on the part of Quenu, and his desire to earn his bread, was rather an expensive thing. While he was going from place to place, there were new and unforeseen expenses constantly occurring. Florent's salary no longer sufficed them, and he was compelled to take several pupils in the evening. He wore the same overcoat for eight years.

The two brothers had made a friend. The house in which they lived had a façade on la Rue Saint-Jacques, and overlooked a great cook-shop, kept by a man named Gavard, whose wife was dying of consumption. When Florent came in, too late to cook a bit of meat, he bought a morsel of turkey, or of roast goose, for twelve sous. This was a great feast. Gavard at last became much interested in this tall, thin fellow, whose history he soon learned. He took a fancy to Quenu, who fairly haunted the cook-shop. As soon as his brother left home, he

hastened to his friend, and remained there all day, watching the huge spits turn slowly before the clear fire.

The copper saucepans glittered—the poultry smoked—the lard bubbled in the frying-pans, and each spoke to Quenu as he, with a long-handled spoon in his hand, basted the brown breasts of the geese and the turkeys. Then when the fowls were cooked to a turn, and taken from the spit, and the skewers drawn out, the boy looked on in ecstasy—talking to the turkeys—telling them that they smelled deliciously, and that they should be eaten—every mouthful—and that the cat should not have even a bone. He was perfectly happy when Gavard gave him a slice of bread, and permission to dip it into the gravy.

This place was unquestionably where Quenu took his fancy for cooking, and later, after he had tried all trades, he came back to that. He was afraid that his brother would be displeased, as he had rather a contempt for the good things of the table; but finding that Florent listened patiently, while he described some complicated dish, he summoned courage to announce his vocation, and soon entered the Restaurant. From that time the life of the two brothers was settled. They lived together in the same large room; that is, they met there each evening, and parted again in the morning, one with his face gay and bright, the other with the downcast look of an overworked professor. Florent carefully laid aside his black coat, while Quenu put on his apron, his white jacket and tall cap, and busied himself about the fire in the preparation of some dainty. Never was a ménage on more

congenial footing. The elder brother continued to grow thin, burned out by the energy of his father; the younger grew plumper and plumper, a true son of Normandy. They loved in each other their common mother—that woman who was made up of unselfish tenderness.

They had in Paris one relative, a brother of their mother, a pork-vendor in the Quartier des Halles. He was a coarse, miserly fellow, who received them as if they were beggars, when they first called upon him, and they repeated their visits only at rare intervals. On the birth-day of the old man, Quenu carried him a bouquet, and received ten sous. Florent suffered tortures, while Gradelle—for this was the name of the uncle—examined his threadbare overcoat, with the uneasy suspicious look of a man who expects to be asked for a loan of five francs. Florent had the simplicity one day to ask his uncle to change a hundred-franc note, and after this, his uncle was less afraid to see the children, as he called them, come in. But their friendship advanced but slowly.

These years were to Florent a long dream, a dream that was both sweet and sad. He tasted all the bitter pleasure of self-immolation. At home he was beloved; outside, among his pupils, where he was subjected to a thousand humiliations, he felt himself becoming embittered and thoroughly wicked. His ambition, which he thought dead, leaped again into life; long months of discipline were needed, before he could bow his head and accept poverty and mediocrity. Eager to escape temptation, he threw himself into an ideal goodness, and created for

himself a refuge of justice and absolute truth. It was then he became a Republican, as despairing girls become nuns—and as he could find no Republic which would drown his woes, he created one. Books no longer charmed him; all that blackened paper in the midst of which he lived, recalled to him his ill-smelling class-room, the chewed paper-balls flung about by the boys, and long, wearisome hours. Books only spoke to him of revolt, and awakened his ambition and pride, while he felt the most imperative need of peace and rest. To dream of happiness and of the realization of his dreams was his one recreation—the occupation of his leisure hours. He read no more than was demanded by the duties of his profession. He took long walks through the outer Boulevards, devising all the time certain measures and humanitarian devices which would change this suffering town into a city of the blest. When the days of February steeped Paris in blood, he rushed about and became one of those orators who preach Revolution as if it were a new religion—all sweetness and redemption!

It needed the dark December days to change this universal tenderness. He allowed himself to be taken with the spirit of a lamb, and was treated like a wolf. When he awoke from a dream of a sermon on Fraternity, he was suffering the pangs of hunger on the cold stones of a casemate at Bicêtre.

Quenu, who was then twenty-two, was filled with mortal anguish, when his brother did not return, and the next morning went to the Montmartre Cemetery to look

for him among the dead, who were covered with straw, all but their heads. He was blinded by tears at this horrible sight.

At the end of a week he heard that his brother was a prisoner, but he could not see him. On his persisting, he was threatened with arrest himself. He then went to find Uncle Gradelle, and implored him to save Florent; but Uncle Gradelle flew into a passion, and declared that it served the fellow right; he had no business to get mixed up with those Republicans, and added that he always knew that Florent would turn out badly, for it was written on his face. Quenu wept his eyes out, and would not go away. His uncle was a little ashamed then, and felt as if he must do something for this poor boy, and proposed that he should come to him; he needed an assistant. Quenu dreaded to return to his great empty room, and accepted the offer made by his uncle. He slept in a little dark closet, where he could hardly stretch himself out; but he wept less than he would have done, had his brother's empty bed stared him in the face.

He succeeded finally in seeing Florent; but, on returning from his first visit to Bicêtre, he was taken ill, and was kept in bed for three weeks. This was his first and only attack of illness. Gradelle cursed his Republican nephew in his heart, and when he, one morning, heard that he had been sent to Cayenne, he rushed to Quenu, awoke him roughly, to convey this intelligence, which had such an effect on the young man that the next day he was on his feet. A month later, and he laughed, though angry with

himself that he did so; but after a little he laughed as of yore.

He learned all the art of cooking pork; he liked nothing better than to be in the kitchen. Uncle Gradelle told him that few cooks knew how to manage pork, and that he could teach him many a secret. As the young man was really useful to him, Gradelle began to like him after his own fashion. He sold the poor furniture of la Rue Royer-Collard for forty francs, and kept the money, for he said "that spendthrift, Quenu, would only throw it out of the window." He ended by giving him six francs each month for pocket money.

Quenu, cramped for money, and almost brutalized, was very happy, for he had made a friend at his Uncle Gradelle's, who, when he lost his wife, had engaged a girl to assist at the counter. He selected one that was good-looking, knowing that his choice would be another attraction to his shop. He knew in la Rue Cuvier, near the Jardin des Plantes, a widow lady, whose husband had been Postmaster at Plassans. This lady, who lived upon a very small income, had brought from that town a pretty child whom she treated like her own daughter. Lisa took care of her adopted mother with calm serenity. If she were a little too serious, she was very beautiful when she smiled. Her great charm was in this rare smile; then her very look was a caress. The old lady often said that a smile from Lisa would tempt her to follow her to the infernal regions. When an attack of asthma carried her off, she left to the child of her adoption all her savings—

about ten thousand francs. Lisa was a week alone in the little apartment in la Rue Cuvier, and it was there that Gradelle went to look for her. He knew her from having seen her, when the lady with whom she resided paid him an occasional visit. At the funeral he was quite struck by her beauty, and, as they were lowering the coffin, it suddenly occurred to him that she would be quite superb behind his counter. He went a week later to make her an offer; he promised her thirty francs a month with board. She asked twenty-four hours for consideration, and at the end of that time she arrived with her little bundle and her ten thousand francs sewed into her corset. A month later she ruled the house; Gradelle, Quenu and the smallest of the scullions. Quenu, in particular, would have cut off his fingers for her.

Lisa, who was the eldest child of a Macquart at Plassans, had a father living, but she never heard from him. She mentioned more than once that her mother, when living, had been a hard-working woman, and that she was like her. She was, indeed, very industrious. She talked too, of the duties of a wife and of a husband, in such a sensible way, that Quenu was quite charmed. He told her he had precisely the same ideas—which were, simply, that everybody ought to work—that each individual has his happiness in his own hands—that to encourage idleness is to encourage sin. This was an out and out condemnation of drunkenness, the besetting sin of the old Macquarts. Unknown to herself it was a real Macquart that spoke in her—a reasonable, logical, settled Macquart—who had

found out that the best way to sleep comfortably is to make one's own bed. She gave to this consideration much time and much thought. When she was only six years old, she would sit still the whole day long, on the promise of being rewarded by a cake at night.

At Gradelle's, Lisa continued to live her calm, methodical life. She had not accepted the good man's proposition without mature deliberation. She needed a home and a protector, and felt certain that a future would be opened to her—a solid, comfortable future—a life of healthy enjoyment and regular work, without fatigue or responsibility. She took care of her counter in the conscientious way in which she had discharged all her duties at the Postmaster's widow. Before long, the cleanliness and whiteness of Lisa's aprons were a proverb in the Quartier. Uncle Gradelle was so pleased that he said sometimes to Quenu, as he chopped his sausages:

"Upon my word! if I were not over sixty, I would marry that girl! A woman like that, my boy, is worth a fortune in trade!"

Quenu drank all this in, but he laughed, nevertheless, one fine day, when a neighbor accused him of being in love with Lisa. They were very good friends. The girl occupied, next to the closet where the youth slept, a room which she had made very pretty, with a light paper and muslin curtains. They stood on the landing talking a few minutes, and then parted with a cheerful good-night. Quenu heard Lisa moving about; the partition wall was so thin that he could hear every sound. And when he heard

the bed crack after she had put out her candle, he said to himself: "Mademoiselle Lisa is not a feather by any means!"

This went on for a year. In the morning the girl would greet the young man without the smallest embarrassment, and would often help him in his work. They would each taste the sausages, to ascertain if they were highly enough seasoned. Her judgment was good, and she had several excellent receipts from the South, which he tried with great success. In the afternoons, when there were no customers in the shop, they talked quietly together. She sat behind her counter knitting, and he on a log of wood near by. The two understood each other to perfection. They talked a little of cooking, then of Uncle Gradelle, and exchanged a little harmless gossip about the Quartier. She told him stories as she would to a child. She knew any quantity, and wonderful legends also—full of lambs and angels—which she repeated in a sweet, flute-like voice, and with her solemn little manner. At eleven o'clock they lighted their candles, and marched up-stairs side by side. At the doors of their rooms they would stop.

"Good-night, Mademoiselle Lisa."

"Good-night, Monsieur Quenu."

One morning, Uncle Gradelle was struck down by an apoplectic fit, while preparing a galantine. Lisa did not lose her self-possession; she said he must not lie there in the middle of the kitchen. Then she stated to every one that the uncle had died in his bed, where she and Quenu laid him. Had the truth been known, their customers

would have been disgusted and left them. Quenu obeyed all her instructions in a dull stupor; later, he and Lisa wept together. He was the sole heir—he and his brother Florent.

The gossips in the neighborhood looked on old Gradelle as a man of wealth, but the truth was, that not a silver piece could they find. Lisa was very uneasy. Quenu saw her looking about as if she had lost something. Finally she decided on a grand cleaning. One afternoon she had been in the cellar for a couple of hours, and came up with something in her apron. Quenu was busy, and she waited until he had finished what he was doing, and talked with him in an indifferent tone, but her eyes were very bright. She smiled her rare smile and said she wished to speak to him. She climbed the staircase with difficulty, her movements hampered by the burthen she carried in her apron. At the top she was obliged to sit down and breathe. Quenu, in considerable astonishment, followed her into her room. It was the first time he had ever crossed the threshold. She closed the door, and dropping the corners of her apron, which her stiffened fingers could no longer hold, she let fall on her bed a perfect rain of gold and silver. She had found in the bottom of a salting-tub Uncle Gradelle's treasure.

The two young people sat down on the bed and looked at this pile, which they began to count. There were forty thousand francs in gold, three thousand in silver, and shut up in a tin box, forty-two thousand in bank notes. They were two good hours in making this calculation. Quenu's

hands trembled, but Lisa was perfectly calm, when they named the sum total—eighty-five thousand francs! Naturally, they began to talk of their future, and of their marriage, though there had never been any allusion made to it before. This money seemed to untie their tongues, and they sat talking until dusk, when Lisa started and blushed. The bed was all in disorder. The gold lay heaped on the pillow between them.

They started up in as much confusion as if they had committed some great fault. Then Lisa got her ten thousand francs, which Quenu wished to add to his uncle's money. It was agreed that Lisa should keep it all together for a while, in her wardrobe. She locked it up, straightened out the bed, and the two went quietly down-stairs. They were exactly like husband and wife with their common interests. The marriage took place the next month, and the Quartier thought it the most natural thing in the world. There was a vague rumor of the finding of the treasure, and Lisa's honesty was a subject of endless eulogy. After all, she need never have told Quenu; she could have kept the money, as no one had seen it. Of course, Quenu ought to marry her! He was a lucky dog, to be sure, to have such a handsome wife, and one, too, who had found a fortune for him.

Lisa smiled when she heard any of these whispers. She and her husband lived much as they had done before —like two friends—rather than as married lovers. Lisa, however, was too intelligent a woman not to understand the folly of allowing these eighty-five thousand francs to

rest quietly in the drawer of her wardrobe. Quenu would have liked to put them back into the salting-tub, and when they had made as much more, retire to Suresnes, a place they both liked. But she had very different ideas. La Rue Pirouette was offensive to her ideas of cleanliness. She wanted air, sunshine and light. The shop where Uncle Gradelle had amassed this treasure, sou by sou, was a dark hole, so to speak, of which many are to be found in old Paris, permeated with the smell of grease and cooking, in spite of all the soap and water which may be lavished upon them; and Lisa dreamed of one of the modern shops, with large panes of glass. She had no desire to play the lady behind the counter. She had a very clear idea of the duties of the position she wished to undertake.

Quenu was much startled, the first time she spoke of moving and spending a portion of their money in decorating a shop. She shrugged her shoulders with a smile.

One evening, at twilight, before the shop was lighted, the husband and wife heard one woman say to another, before their door:

"No, indeed, I will not go there. I would not buy an inch of black pudding of them."

They had had a death in their kitchen. Quenu was ready to weep; for this was a sorry bit of intelligence to get about. This it was, in fact, which finally reconciled him to the idea of moving. His wife at once occupied herself with the new shop. She had found one in an excellent situation.

The Halles were opposite—their custom would soon be quadrupled, and their place would be known throughout Paris. Quenu allowed himself to be drawn into mad expenditures, and put thirty thousand francs into marble, mirrors and gilding.

Lisa spent hours with the workmen discussing the most trivial details. When at last all was completed, and she took her seat behind the counter, the whole world flocked in merely to see the shop.

There was a large amount of white marble—there were huge mirrors and glittering chandeliers—suggesting an indefinite number of rooms—all filled with good things to eat.

On the right was a wide counter of white and pink marble—a repetition of the floor, which had, in addition, a border in a wide pattern of deep red.

The whole Quartier took pride in this pork-shop, and for a month people stood still on the sidewalk to contemplate it, and to catch a glimpse of Lisa. Her beautiful pink and white skin was as wonderful as the tints of the marble. She was the master-spirit, or rather the goddess —the stately and solid idol of the shop, and went by the name of "la belle Lisa."

On the right of the entrance was the dining-room, always kept in the most delicate order, with a buffet, a table and cane-seated chairs—the inlaid floor and the paper on the walls, both pale yellow. The room was a little cold in tone, brightened as it was only by a brass hanging-lamp, with its porcelain shade, over the centre of the table. A

door from the dining-room opened into the large square kitchen, at the end of which was a small, flagged court-yard, which served as a place to put pots and kettles which were past use—boxes and barrels. On the left of the fountain, and by the side of the gutter which carried off the dirty water, were a few pots of flowers, withered and dying.

Business prospered. Quenu, who had been considerably startled at the magnitude of his wife's ideas, ended by admitting her cleverness and wisdom. In five years they had a comfortable little sum of eighty thousand francs well invested. Lisa said they were not ambitious—that they were in no haste to grow rich. They were young still—they had plenty of time before them, and they wished to take their comfort as they went along.

"Now," added Lisa, in an hour of expansion, "I have a cousin in Paris. I never see him. The two families are not on terms. He has taken the name of Saccard—as he wanted certain things forgotten. Well, I am told that this cousin makes millions; but he is always in a hurry—hardly stops to eat his dinner. I don't call that living! We know what we eat, and we enjoy it. I can see no use in money, except for what it buys. As to piling one pence on another, I would sooner fold my arms and sit still. I should like to see my cousin's millions, though, for I do not quite believe in them. I saw him the other day in a carriage, and he was as yellow as a lemon, and looked perfectly overwhelmed with care. Of course, this is his own affair; but we think very differently."

The house and shop both prospered. One daughter was born, a year after their marriage. Everything went smoothly, as Lisa was an excellent manager, and her system was perfect. Husband, wife and child grew fat together. Quenu alone, had his hours of sadness when he thought of poor Florent. In 1856, letters came to him—then followed a long silence, and Quenu saw by the papers that three convicts had been drowned in attempting to make their escape from the Ile du Diable. He applied to the Head of Police, but could learn no further particulars. His brother was probably dead, and yet he cherished a gleam of hope.

Florent, who was wandering in Dutch Guiana, delayed writing, as he determined each day to start on the next, for France. Quenu at last made up his mind that his brother was dead. Lisa had never known Florent, but she listened kindly to all her husband had to say; she heard him describe for the hundredth time the room in la Rue Royer-Collard, where the brothers had lived together—the innumerable trades he had tried, the dishes he cooked on the stove. She listened quietly, with infinite sympathy. It was amid these placid joys that Florent fell one September morning, just as Lisa stood in the door-way, basking in the morning sun. Husband and wife were thoroughly upset. Gavard insisted that "the convict," as he called him, should be concealed at once. Lisa, paler and graver than usual, showed him to a room on the fifth floor. Quenu cut some slices of bread and ham, but Florent could hardly eat; he was utterly worn out, and

remained in bed for nearly a week, with symptoms of brain fever, which were energetically and successfully combated.

When he was better, he saw Lisa at his bedside, with a spoon and cup in her hand. He tried to thank her, but she gently bade him keep quiet; that he was not to talk at present. When at last he was able to leave his bed and his room, Quenu came up for him, and took him down-stairs, where they occupied a small suite, consisting of three rooms and a closet. There was first an unfurnished room, then a small salon, the furniture of which was always shrouded in white draperies, but dimly seen, as the curtains were closely drawn, that the light should not fade the pale blue of the walls. Then came the bed-room, where they lived. This was comfortably furnished in mahogany. The bed was marvellous to behold, with its fine mattresses, its fine pillows, and its eider-down spread, and the air of absolute sleepiness which hung over it. It was a bed in which it was impossible not to sleep. The armoire à glace, the toilette table, the crochet-cover on the guéridon, the chairs, protected by squares of guipure, gave the place a look of Bourgeois luxury. Against the wall on the left, on either side of the chimney piece, which was ornamented with vases on brass stands, and with a clock, representing a Guttenberg, with his finger on his lip, buried in thought—were hung portraits in oil of Quenu and Lisa, in oval and highly ornamented frames. Quenu smiled; Lisa had quite a modish air; both were in black, with very pink and white complexions. A moquette carpet, with complicated garlands of flowers

intermingled with golden stars, concealed the polished floor. Before the bed lay one of those soft rugs made of ravelled carpet, the result of the patient labor of "la belle Lisa," as she sat behind her counter. A very odd effect was produced amid all these modern things, by a gigantic Secretary, black with age, which stood against the wall. It had been varnished, but nothing could rejuvenate it. Lisa wished to keep this piece of furniture, which Uncle Gradelle had used for more than forty years. She said it would bring good luck. It had a most formidable aspect, with its enormous locks, and was so heavy, that it was almost impossible to move it.

When Florent and Quenu entered, Lisa was seated before the let-down leaf of the Secretary, writing. She was adding up long columns of figures in a hand that was round and very legible. She made a little sign to signify that they were not to speak to her. The two men sat down in silence. Florent looked around the room at the bed, the two portraits, and the clock.

"Now then," said Lisa, at last having verified her accounts, "listen to me. We have some business to settle with you, my dear Florent."

This was the first time she had thus addressed him. She continued:

"Your Uncle Gradelle died without a will; you and your brother were the two sole heirs. To-day we are ready to give you your share."

"But I ask nothing," exclaimed Florent; "in fact, I want nothing."

Quenu was in ignorance of his wife's intention. He turned a little pale, and looked at her with an air of vexation. He was sincerely attached to his brother, but it struck him as unnecessary to throw his uncle's money at him in this way.

"I know very well, dear Florent," resumed Lisa, "that you did not come back with any intention of claiming that which belongs to you. Only business is business, and we had best get through with it at once. Your uncle's savings amounted to eighty-five thousand francs. I have, therefore, put down to your credit forty-two thousand five hundred francs. Please look at this."

And she showed him the paper.

"It is, unfortunately, not as easy to put a value on the shop, stock and business. I can only guess at this, but I have put it all down at fifteen thousand three hundred and ten francs, which will give you seven thousand six hundred and fifty-five francs. Please add these columns up."

And she gave him another sheet of paper.

"But," cried Quenu, "the old man's shop was not worth fifteen thousand francs. I would not have given ten thousand for it!"

His wife exasperated him; it was folly to push honesty to such a point as this; Florent would never have thought of the shop; why had she not let it alone?

"The shop was worth fifteen thousand three hundred and ten francs," answered Lisa, in an imperturbable tone. "You understand, my dear Florent, that it is unnecessary for us to employ a lawyer to arrange our matters. We

are entirely ready to give you your share. I thought of this as soon as you came; and while you were ill I went over our accounts, and I have made it all clear to myself, and I hope to you. Ask any questions you please. I have all the data here."

Florent smiled. He was touched by this probity. He laid the paper on the lap of "la belle Lisa," and took her hand in his.

"My dear Lisa," he said, "I am happy to see that you are so prosperous, but I do not want this money. You and my brother should be the sole heirs, for you two took care of him to the last. I need nothing, and I do not wish to disturb your business."

She insisted, even became angry, while Quenu sat gnawing his thumbs in vexed silence.

"Ah!" answered Florent, smiling; "if Uncle Gradelle should hear you; he is quite capable of coming back to this world and taking his money again. He never liked me, you know."

"No, indeed, he never liked you!" murmured Quenu, who could stand it no longer.

But Lisa declared that she did not care to have the responsibility of money that was not her own. And Florent asked if she would not allow him to invest his money in her eating-shop. He added that he was quite willing to accept a little for immediate use, as he needed an entire outfit.

"Of course," said Quenu, "you will live here; you will eat, and we will provide you with all you need. That is understood."

Quenu was quite touched, and declared he would take on himself the duty of making his brother as fat as himself, but Florent shook his head. Lisa, in the meantime, had closed her account books and replaced them in the Secretary.

"You make a great mistake, both of you," she said, firmly; "but I have done all I could. Now you must go your own way; but pray let us have no arguments—they worry me too much."

They discussed other matters now. It was necessary to give some explanation of Florent's return. He told them that he had come back to France, on the papers of a poor fellow who had died in his arms of yellow fever at Surinam. Singularly enough, this youth was also named Florent—Florent Laquerrière—and had only one cousin in Paris. Nothing was easier than to assume this man's identity. Lisa agreed to be the cousin. It was decided, therefore, that he should be described as the cousin returned from foreign parts, and hospitably entertained by the Quenu-Gradelles'—as the household was called in the Quartier—until he could find a position.

That evening Florent was freshly arrayed all in black, contrary to the wishes of Quenu, who said that it was most dreary. There was no attempt made to conceal the new-comer, and Lisa made constant allusions to her cousin. He wandered from the shop to the kitchen and back again. Quenu fretted at the table because he ate so little, and left on his plate half of what was placed there. Lisa was as calm and placid as ever; did not in any way

object to his presence, not even in the morning, when he was really very much in the way. She forgot him in fact so entirely at times, that when he suddenly appeared before her, she started quickly; but this start was immediately followed by a sweet smile. She was very much impressed by the disinterestedness of this man, and felt for him great respect, not unmingled with a vague fear. Florent enjoyed the affection by which he was surrounded.

At bed-time he went up-stairs a little wearied by the emptiness of his day. Two youths employed in the shop inhabited attic rooms by the side of his own. One of them, Léon, the apprentice, was not more than fifteen; he was a real child, who, with the most innocent air in the world, helped himself surreptitiously to every stray sausage or bit of meat on which he could lay his hand. He hid them under his bed, and ate them during the night. Many a time, in the middle of the night, Florent fancied that Léon was giving a supper. He heard whispers and the noise of eating—rustling of paper and a rippling laugh—a child's laugh, like the soft trill of a flageolet.

The other fellow, Auguste Landois, was from Troyes, and very stout, with an enormous head, and bald, although he was not twenty-eight. The first evening that Florent was there, this fellow told his story in a long, confused way. He had only come to Paris to learn the business, and had intended to return shortly to Troyes, where he intended to open an eating-house, and where his cousin, Augustine Landois, was waiting for him. They had had

the same god-parents, and bore the same names; but now he had been bitten by ambition, and wished to settle in Paris, and there use to advantage the small inheritance he had received from his mother. Auguste said many pleasant things of Madame Quenu. He said she was most kind, and had consented to his sending for Augustine, to take the place of a girl in her shop, who had turned out ill. He had learned his trade, and now she was learning hers. In a year or eighteen months they would marry, and establish themselves somewhere in Paris. They were in no haste to marry, because business had not been good that year. He then told how they had been photographed together at a fête. He went into Florent's room to show this photograph, which he thought the girl had left behind, when she vacated this room, which had been hers. He held the candle high up, as he said that Augustine would be much better off down-stairs, for the attics were cold in winter. Then he went off, leaving Florent alone, opposite the photograph.

Auguste was only another Quenu; Augustine an unripe Lisa. Florent, liked by these young men, adored by his brother, and quietly accepted by Lisa, was, in fact, utterly ennuyé. He had endeavored to obtain pupils, but without success, particularly, as out of fear of being recognized, he did not dare apply at any schools.

Lisa gently suggested that he should apply to some mercantile houses for a position as corresponding clerk. She adhered to this idea, and finally offered to look for such a situation herself, as she began to feel a certain

annoyance at finding him lounging about, and always under her feet. At first she felt only a mild dislike for a person who folded his arms, and waited for the bread to fall into his mouth. She had not yet begun to reproach him in her own mind for eating of their food.

"I could not swallow a mouthful," she would say, "if I dreamed all day long, as you do. It would take away my appetite."

Gavard also looked for a situation for Florent, but his efforts were made in the most mysterious way. He wished, beside, to find something dramatic, some employment especially suited to "a convict."

Gavard was a man of the Opposition. He was not much over fifty, but he boasted of having seen four governments: Charles X.—the Priests—and the Nobles, he stigmatized as rabble. Louis Philippe was an imbecile, with his Bourgeois talk, and he told the story of the woollen hose in which the Citizen King concealed his money; as to the Republic of '48, it was a farce wherein the workmen had been deceived. He did not say, however, that he approved of the Second of December, because he now regarded Napoleon III. as his personal enemy—a man who shut himself up with De Morny and "that crew," to commit all sorts of enormities.

He was extremely diffuse on this point, and dropped his voice, as he affirmed, that every night close carriages, filled with women, drove to the Tuileries, and that he himself had often heard the noise of their orgies.

Gavard's religion was to be as disagreeable as possible

to the Government. He voted for the candidate which would be most embarrassing to the Ministry, and did his best to lead the police astray in any of their political investigations, and to give them a most incendiary character. He talked with an air of great importance, as if the Tuileries set had known and trembled before him, and swore he could have half of them guillotined, and the other half transported. All his noisy, political chatter was pervaded by the same spirit, which induces a Parisian shop-keeper to open his shutters on a day of a fight at the barricades, to see the dead bodies. Consequently, when Florent returned from Cayenne, he immediately set himself to plan some way in which he might safely flout at the Emperor and Ministry, and at all the men in office, down to the very Sergeants in the police force.

Gavard gloried in Florent's companionship. It was like a forbidden pleasure. He winked at him, and told him the simplest thing in a sepulchral whisper; and pressed his hand in the most significant way.

At last he had an adventure; he had a companion who was really compromised, and he was now able, without making his statement out of whole cloth, to talk of the danger that he run. He felt a certain fear withal, in the face of this man who had escaped from prison, and whose haggard face and worn frame told of sufferings and privations; but this fear was delicious after all, and convinced him that he had really done an astonishing thing, in welcoming, as a friend, a man who was as compromising as Florent. Florent was now sacred to him. He swore by Florent,

and Florent's name rose to his lips whenever he wished to give an instance of the importance of the Government.

Gavard had lost his wife some months after the Coup d'État; but he kept his cook-shop until 1856. At this time the belief was current that he had made considerable money, in connection with a grocer in the neighborhood, by furnishing dried fruits to the army in the East; but the truth was that, after he sold out his business, he, for a year, lived on his income. But he did not care to allude to the origin of his fortune, for it prevented him from expressing his opinion of the Crimean war, which he stigmatized "as an adventurous expedition, invented merely to consolidate the throne and fill certain pockets."

At the end of a year, he was frightfully bored by his bachelor life and quarters, and as he was in the habit of calling on the Quenu-Gradelles' almost daily, he ended by establishing himself very near them. Then the Halles fascinated him, and he determined to take a stall in the poultry market, merely to fill up the emptiness of his days, and to hear all the gossip of the market.

Here he was in his element, and enjoyed the constant chatter immensely.

Florent often went there to see him. The middle of the day was still warm. The women sat picking their poultry in the sunshine—the feathers looking like snow falling from their fingers. Questions and entreaties followed Florent as he walked through the narrow path.

"A fine pair of ducks, sir? Come, and let me show you chickens as fat as butter. Won't you buy this pair of pigeons?"

He passed on with a half impatient frown, and the women picked all the faster. The thick down filled the air, already heavy with the odor of the poultry.

About the middle of the alley, near the fountain, was Gavard in his shirt-sleeves, his arm folded over the bib of his blue apron, holding forth to ten or more women over whom he reigned, he being the only man in the poultry market.

He had quarrelled with five or six girls, one after the other, whom he had employed to keep his stall, and finally decided to sell his merchandise himself, saying, that these fools spent their whole day in chattering. As it was necessary, however, that some one should take his place when he was away, he engaged Marjolin, who was generally out of a situation. Florent was always amused and always astonished, at Gavard's incessant chatter, and at his entire self-possession among all these petticoats—interrupting one, quarrelling with another ten stalls off, making more noise himself, than did all the others put together.

Gavard's family consisted only of a sister-in-law and a niece. When his wife died, her elder sister, Madame Lecœur, who had been a widow for a year, was perfectly inconsolable, and went every evening, to console the bereaved and miserable husband. She unquestionably had at that time the idea of becoming the successor of the dear deceased. But Gavard hated thin women, thin cats and thin dogs; and Madame Lecœur, furious at seeing the comfortable fortune slip through her fingers, absolutely

hated him, and soon learned to regard her brother-in-law as her absolute enemy. She occupied herself entirely with his comings and goings. When she saw him take this stall, only a few steps from the place, where she sold butter, cheese and eggs, she accused him of having done it "merely to tease her and bring her ill-luck." She made such a fuss, and took this so much to heart, that she ended by losing much of her custom.

For some time she had with her the daughter of one of her sisters, a peasant woman. The child grew up in the midst of the market. As her family name was Sarriet, she was soon called "La Sarriette." At sixteen La Sarriette was so bewilderingly beautiful, that gentlemen went to buy her cheese, merely to look at her. She cared little for these gentlemen; she claimed to be of the people, and made her selection from among them. It was a Porter—whom this brunette, with a Virgin-like face and starry eyes—a porter whom she chose. At twenty she was established at the Halles as a fruit merchant, and her lover, Monsieur Jules, wore the freshest of blouses, and a velvet cap, and sauntered into the market late in the day. They lived together in la Rue Vauvillürs, on the third floor of a great house.

La Sarriette's ingratitude was the last touch of bitterness in the cup of Madame Lecœur, who reproached her niece vehemently. They quarrelled. The niece amused herself at her aunt's expense with Monsieur Jules, who repeated all her witticisms at market. Gavard thought La Sarriette very droll, and showed himself full of indulgence

toward her. He tapped her on her cheek when he met her. She was plump, and had a skin like satin.

One afternoon, as Florent was in the shop, greatly fatigued by the long walk he had taken, Marjolin came in. This great stolid fellow was Lisa's especial protégé. She said he was not bad in any way; that he was a little dull, possibly, but that his strength was almost incredible; that he was a treasure to his employers. It was she who, insisting that he had neither father nor mother, had induced Gavard to take him into his employment.

Lisa was at the counter, annoyed by the dirty shoes of Florent, which had left spots on the marble tessellated floor. Twice she had thrown down saw-dust. She smiled at Marjolin, who said, in a low, mysterious whisper, looking around to see that he was not heard:

"Monsieur Gavard wishes me to say just these words to you. 'Is there any danger, and can he talk with you on matters that you know of?'"

"Say to Monsieur Gavard that we shall expect him," answered Lisa, so accustomed to his mysterious ways that she was quite undisturbed by them.

But Marjolin still lingered, with adoring eyes fixed on the fair mistress of the establishment. Touched by this silent adoration, she said:

"I hope you give entire satisfaction to Monsieur Gavard. He is a good man, and you must try and please him."

"Yes, Madame Lisa."

She turned away to wait on a lady who had come to

buy a pound of *Cotelettes aux cornichons.* She left the counter, and went to the chopping-block at the back of the shop, where, with a sharp knife, she cut three cutlets from a piece of pork. Then, with a wooden mallet, she gave the cutlets each, three sharp, decisive blows. All this Lisa did with rather a serious air.

When the lady was gone, Lisa was astonished to see that Marjolin was still there.

"What! not gone?" she said.

He turned to depart, but she detained him.

"Listen to me," she said, hastily. "I saw you and Cadine together again this morning, and I really cannot understand how a good-looking fellow like yourself can waste so much time, or be seen with that little scapegrace. That is all; go quickly and tell Monsieur Gavard that he can come here at once, while there is no one here."

Marjolin went off with an air of confusion, while "la belle Lisa" stood leaning on her counter, and looking out toward the Halles.

Florent gazed at her, wonderstruck at her beauty. Before her, on white china plates, were sausages from Arles and Lyons; tongues, and small square bits of salt pork; a pig's head, surrounded with jelly; boxes of sardines, floating in oil; blood-red hams, and hams that were pale rose in hue; galantine truffer; boars' heads aux pistaches; and in yellow pots, pâté de foie and pâté de lièvre.

As Gavard did not come, she mechanically rearranged these dishes, and then again waited. The whiteness of

her cuffs and her apron rivalled the whiteness of her dishes.

Florent looked at her reflection in the mirrors; even on the ceiling he saw her—he was, in fact, surrounded with a crowd of Lisas, all as plump and as placid, as the meats before her.

Gavard appeared, and at once went to find Quenu in the kitchen, and then, returning to the shop, he announced in the presence of Lisa, Quenu and Florent, that he had found a situation for the latter. He interrupted himself, however, in the full tide of his discourse, on seeing Mademoiselle Saget appear. She, from the sidewalk, had caught a glimpse of the little circle. The old lady, in her faded dress, and carrying, as usual, her shabby black reticule, wearing a black straw bonnet, guiltless of ribbons, which threw a heavy shadow on her pale face, smiled at Lisa and bowed slightly to the men.

This little old lady was an enigma to the neighborhood, although she had lived forty years in la Rue Pirouette. She never said where she came from, though once she made an incautious allusion to Cherbourg, as if she were born there; but this was all, no one knew more. She talked incessantly, but only of other people—knew the most intimate details of their daily life; peeped into the letters, and listened at the doors of her neighbors.

Her tongue was dreaded throughout the Quartier where she roamed all day long with her empty reticule, pretending that she was buying her provisions, but in reality buying nothing, but picking up all sorts of gossip. Quenu had

always declared her to be the person who had spread the story of Uncle Gradelle's dying in the kitchen. She had always felt an extreme interest in Uncle Gradelle and the Quenus, and for a fortnight had suffered agonies of curiosity from Florent's arrival. She felt certain that she had seen him somewhere. She stood before the counter, and looked first at one dish and then at another.

"I declare," she said, "it is impossible to know what to eat now-a-days. I really have no appetite. Have you any breaded cutlets, Madame Quenu?"

Without waiting for a reply, she raised a cover.

"Yes, Mademoiselle Saget," said Lisa, "I think I have one cutlet left."

"Well, never mind," said the old lady, "I think a breaded cutlet is almost too heavy this evening. Besides, I should rather have something I should not be obliged to warm up."

She drew nearer Florent as she spoke, and looked first at him and then at Gavard, who was beating a devil's tattoo on the marble table.

"Why don't you have a bit of this salt pork?" asked Lisa.

"A bit of pork—yes—I suppose"—and she took up a fork and tried the thickness of each piece in the plate —"and yet I do not know."

"Then take a tongue—a bit of the head or a slice of larded veal," answered Lisa, patiently. But Mademoiselle Saget shook her head, and made a little face of disgust at each one of the dishes, and coming to the conclusion

that she should discover nothing, she departed, saying she should come in another day.

Lisa watched her cross the street, and enter a fruit stall; and then turning to Gavard, she said, quietly:

"Go on."

Gavard began to describe the place he had found for Florent. There was quite a little story attached to it. One of his friends, Monsieur Valoque, Inspector of Fish, was out of health, and was obliged to take a vacation. The poor man had said to him that very morning that he wished to find a substitute himself, so that in case he was cured, he could have his place back again.

"You understand," said Gavard, "that in my opinion, Valoque won't live six months. If Florent is satisfactory, he can keep the place, and it will be delicious to bamboozle the police. Think of Florent having money from these people."

This view of the situation struck him as so deliciously comic that he burst into a shout of laughter.

"I do not wish this position," said Florent. "I have sworn to accept nothing from the Empire. I would die with hunger rather than do it. It is absolutely impossible, Gavard, do you hear?"

Gavard heard, and was far from pleased. Quenu was silent also, but Lisa turned and looked at Florent, whose nostrils dilated with indignation as he spoke.

At this moment, La Sarriette came.

"I forgot to buy some pork," she cried. "Madame Quenu, cut me twelve slips, very slender, for my larks. Jules wants some larks to-day."

She seemed to fill the shop with her rustling skirts. She smiled at every one in succession. Gavard took her hand in his, and she said, boldly:

"You were talking of me, Uncle, when I came in; I know it well."

Lisa called her:

"Are these slips slender enough?" she said. And as she wrapped them in paper, she added: "Do you want anything else?"

"Yes, as long as I am here, you may give me a pound of leaf lard, for I adore fried potatoes. My best breakfast is a bunch of radishes, and two sous worth of fried potatoes."

Lisa put a sheet of stout paper on the scales. She took the lard from a pot with a wooden spatula, and weighed out the pound. She gave the paper a deft twist.

"Twenty-four sous," she said. "Is there anything more?"

La Sarriette shook her head and laughed, with a glance at the men. She wore a shabby gray gown and a red fichu, loosely knotted around her throat. Before she went out, she shook her finger lightly at Gavard, saying:

"Then you won't tell me what you were talking about when I came in? I saw you all laughing. I think you very selfish to keep all your fun to yourself."

She left the shop, and ran across the street. "La belle Lisa" said, dryly:

"Mademoiselle Saget sent her!"

Gavard was considerably disturbed by Florent's reception of his proposition, and would not speak. It was Lisa who broke the silence by saying, in a friendly voice:

"You are wrong, Florent, in refusing this position. You know how hard it is to find employment in these days. You should not be so fastidious."

"I have given my reasons," he answered.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Yes," she replied, "I know very well that you do not like the Government; but that is no reason why you should refuse to earn your bread. And, after all, the Emperor is not a bad man. My dear, do you suppose he knew that you eat mouldy bread and spoiled meat? He can't know everything, of course. You are unjust."

Gavard rebelled at hearing these faint praises of the Emperor.

"No, no, Madame Quenu!" he exclaimed. "You are going too far. They are a set of rascals."

"Oh!" interrupted Lisa, "you are never happy unless you are talking politics, and I hate them; they always make me angry. Beside, they have nothing to do with Florent. What have you to say, Quenu?"

Quenu cautiously replied to his wife's abrupt questions:

"It would be a very good thing, perhaps."

And another long silence fell on the little circle.

"Pray," said Florent, at last—"pray, say no more about this. My mind is made up. I will wait."

"You will wait!" cried Lisa, out of all patience.

The color rose to her cheeks, and she clenched her hands

over her white apron to restrain her quick words. Another person came in at the same moment. It was Madame Lecœur.

"Can you give me a mixed plate for fifty sous per pound?" she said, pretending not to see her brother-in-law as she spoke. Afterward she gave him a careless nod, and then scrutinized the three men, hoping, perhaps, to discover from their expressions, the wonderful secret they were discussing. She saw that she was intruding; but she enjoyed the knowledge, which only made her more rigid and angular in her scanty skirts. Her spider-like arms and bony hands were folded under her apron. She coughed slightly.

"You have a cold," said Gavard, in order to break the awkward silence.

She answered with a curt "No." Her skin was brick-red where it was stretched over her high cheek-bones. This, and a certain odd look about her eyes and lids, indicated some disease of the liver.

She turned to the counter watched by Lisa, who had not the most absolute faith in the honesty of her customer.

"Do not give me any of the brains," said Madame Lecœur. "I do not like them."

Lisa had taken a sharp knife and cut some slices of sausage. She then went to the smoked ham, and to that which was only salted, and took off some delicate pieces. Her white dimpled hands performed their task deftly. She lifted a cover, and said:

"Do you want some of the larded veal?"

Madame Lecœur deliberated for a few moments upon this weighty point, and then nodded an assent.

Lisa took out a slice of larded veal, and then of a pâté of hare's feet, and she laid each slice on the paper on the scales.

"You have not given me any of the boar's head aux pistaches," said Madame Lecœur, in her disagreeable voice.

Lisa was willing to give some of the boar's head; but when the woman insisted on two slices of galantine, she became impatient, and told her frankly that the galantine had truffles, and she could only add it to the mixed plates, which she sold at a higher price.

When the things were weighed, the woman insisted on a slice of jelly and some pickled cucumbers, which Lisa, with hands trembling with indignation, added impatiently.

"It is twenty-five sous, I believe," said Madame Lecœur, enjoying Lisa's irritation, and slowly pulling out her sous from her pocket, and glaring at Gavard, who was swearing under his breath at her prolonged stay. At last she departed, with one long, lingering look.

As soon as she had gone, Lisa burst out:

"And La Saget sent her, too. I wonder if that old woman intends to send all the Halles here, to find out what we are saying? How silly they are! Who ever heard of buying such things as breaded cutlets and mixed plates at this hour? But they would rather give themselves a fit of indigestion than not know. But if La Saget sends in any one else, you will see what I will do!"

Before Lisa's anger, the two men were silent. Gavard was playing with a bit of the railing around the counter. He said slowly, to Florent:

"Don't you see that these scamps have nearly starved you? Very well; now let them feed you. This idea delights me."

Florent smiled, but still shook his head.

Quenu, to please his wife, uttered a few faint words of entreaty; but Lisa did not seem to hear. She was looking intently out toward the Halles. Suddenly, she exclaimed:

"Ah! they have sent 'La Normande,' now. Very well; La Normande shall pay for all the others!"

A tall brunette entered the door. It was the pretty fish-woman, Louise Mehuden, known as La Normande. There was a touch of boldness in her beauty, although her skin was very pale and delicate. She was as tall as Lisa, but her bust was fuller. She entered in an off-hand sort of way, with a gold-chain dangling over her apron, her hair fashionably dressed, and a knot of lace and ribbon at her throat. She brought with her a fresh salt odor, almost like the sea, and had on one of her hands a herring-scale, which caught the light like an opal. The two women had been intimate friends for a long time, although they were also rivals. They called one "la belle Normande," the other "la belle Lisa," and instituted constant comparisons between the two.

Lisa, where she stood, could see the fish-woman among her salmon and turbots. The two women watched each

other closely; la belle Lisa drew her corset-lacing tighter, la belle Normande added rings to her fingers and ribbons to her dress. When the two met, they were very sweet and very complimentary; each watching the other furtively, and taking in the detail of the costume worn by the other.

"Is it to-morrow that you make your black pudding?" asked La Normande, gayly.

Lisa was slow to anger, but not easily soothed.

She answered, "Yes," in one brief monosyllable.

"Because," continued the other, "I adore it when it is hot. I shall come for some."

She realized the lack of cordiality in her rival's manner. She looked at Florent with an air of interest; then, as she did not wish to depart without saying something, she had the rashness to add:

"The last I bought of you was not fresh."

"Not fresh!" answered the mistress of the establishment, white with indignation. She might have restrained herself but for that knot of ribbon. Was it not enough, she thought, that she must be spied and watched—she must also be insulted! She placed her hands on her counter, and in a voice that was hoarse with anger, she said, slowly:

"Tell me; last week, when you sold me a pair of soles, did I say before everybody that they smelled badly?"

"Smelled badly! My soles!" cried the fish-woman, flushed and breathless.

The two women fairly glared at each other. All their

beautiful friendship had vanished. A word sufficed to show their sharp teeth under their smiles.

"You are an insulting creature!" said la belle Normande. "If ever I put my foot here again you will know it."

"All right!" answered la belle Lisa.

The fish-woman went out, uttering a sentence which left Lisa trembling.

The scene passed so rapidly that the three men had no time to interfere. Lisa soon regained her self-control, and entered into conversation, without making any allusion to what had taken place. She told Gavard that he had best say nothing to Monsieur Valoque for two or three days. Quenu went back to his kitchen, and Gavard took Florent off with him to get a glass of Vermout; they saw in the distance three women—Madame Lecœur, Mademoiselle Saget, and La Sarriette, talking together, very busily.

The old maid was holding forth:

"As I was telling you, Madame Lecœur, your brother-in-law is forever in their shop. You have seen him, have you not?"

"Oh, certainly; he was sitting on a table—"

"I," interrupted La Sarriette, "I could not hear one word. I can't imagine what you expected me to hear."

Mademoiselle Saget shrugged her shoulders.

"You have no idea, I suppose, why these people are so very attentive to Monsieur Gavard. In my opinion, they mean him to leave all he possesses to little Pauline."

"Do you think that?" cried Madame Lecœur, turning pale.

Then in a gasping tone, as if she had received a dagger-thrust, she said:

"I am all alone—this man can do, of course, just as he pleases—his niece and he are good friends—she has already forgotten what she has cost me."

"No, indeed, aunt," said La Sarriette, "I have forgotten nothing; it is you who have never had anything but harsh words for me."

They were at once reconciled—the niece promised to be more considerate, and the aunt swore that she regarded Sarriette as her own daughter. Then Mademoiselle proceeded to give them advice as to the manner in which they should behave to prevent Gavard from wasting his property. It was decided that the Quenu-Gradelles did not amount to much, and that they had best be carefully watched.

"Something is going on," said the old lady, "but what I can't yet tell. This Florent—this cousin of Madame Quenu's—what do you think of him?"

The three women put their heads close together.

"You know very well," said Lecœur, "that we saw him one morning with holes in his shoes, and ragged clothes, all covered with dust. He really frightens me."

"Nonsense," murmured La Sarriette, "he is thin, very thin; but he is a good man all the same."

Mademoiselle Saget reflected.

"I have been trying to find this out for a fortnight. I am certain that Monsieur Gavard knew him; in fact I feel as if I had seen him somewhere."

She was still cudgelling her memory, when La Normande swept down upon them like an avalanche.

"She is a civil creature, certainly, that Quenu woman," she cried. "Will you believe that she told me that I sold stinking fish! Just think of that!—while their own spoiled pork poisons everybody!"

"What did you say to her?" asked the old woman, delighted to hear that the two friends had quarrelled.

"I? Nothing—not a word. I just went in to engage some pudding for to-morrow night, and she insulted me—miserable hypocrite, with all her mild airs! But she shall pay more dearly for this than she thinks for!"

The three women felt instinctively that La Normande was not telling the truth, but they were none the less ready to espouse her quarrel. They turned up la Rue Rambuteau, busy with the invention of some story which should injure the Quenus.

"But what did the cousin say?" asked Mademoiselle Saget.

"The cousin!" answered La Normande, sharply. "You believe in that cousin, do you? He is much more likely to be a lover."

The three others exclaimed at this, for Lisa's propriety of conduct had passed into a proverb in the Quartier.

"Oh! I mean what I say; these women who have that touch-me-not look, are no better than others, let me tell you."

Mademoiselle Saget nodded, as if to say that she agreed with this opinion. She said, insinuatingly:

"To be sure this cousin seems to have fallen from the skies. And the Quenus' account of him does not hang together very well."

"He is her lover, I tell you!" reiterated the fish-woman—"some fellow she has picked up in the street."

"She has given him an entire new suit of clothes," said Madame Lecœur. "He must cost her a pretty penny."

The women immediately began to discuss all that went on in the Quenu-Gradelle ménage. Madame Lecœur declared that she would open her brother's eyes in regard to the character of the house he frequented. La Normande grew a little calmer, and ashamed of what she had said, left her friends abruptly.

When she had departed, Madame Lecœur said:

"I am sure that La Normande was insolent, for it is a way she has. She had best not speak of Lisa's cousin, for people will be apt to remember that she found a baby one fine morning in her fish-stall!"

They looked at each other and laughed. When Madame Lecœur left in her turn, La Sarriette said:

"I wish my aunt would let all these people alone. She grows thin fussing about her neighbors' affairs. She always beat me if a man looked at me; but she need have no fear. She will never find any brat under her bed!"

Mademoiselle Saget laughed delightedly, and when she was alone, she said, half aloud, that these people were not worth the cord to hang them with.

She hurried down the street until she reached the Bakery, kept by a certain Madame Taboureau, who was a

handsome woman, and a friend of Lisa's; also, a great authority on all subjects. When any one said:

"Madame Taboureau said this!" "Madame Taboureau said that!" there was no further discussion.

Mademoiselle Saget inquired when the oven would be hot, that she might have a dish of pears baked, and then said many nice things of Lisa—extolling her exquisite neatness and the superiority of all the things she sold at her shop.

Then quite pleased with this moral alibi, and enchanted at the coming battle which she sniffed afar off, she started home—her mind dwelling pertinaciously on the image of Madame Quenu's cousin.

That same evening after dinner Florent went out, and walked for some time in one of the covered streets of the Halles. A fine fog was rising, filling the empty places with a gray sadness, pierced at intervals with the yellow gas. For the first time he felt himself to be in the way; he realized the inopportune fashion in which he had fallen into this fat and comfortable little circle. He said to himself that he had disturbed the whole Quartier—that he embarrassed his brother and his brother's wife, and that they found it difficult to carry their contraband cousin. These reflections rendered him very sad—not that he felt his brother or Lisa to be unkind in any way; he thought them only too kind. But he accused himself of a want of delicacy in quartering himself upon them. Doubts disturbed him. The recollection of the conversation in the shop made him uncomfortable, although he did not know

precisely why. Perhaps he was wrong in refusing the position which had been offered. This thought was bitter to him, and he wondered if he should be compelled to act contrary to his convictions. Here a damp blast of wind compelled him to button his overcoat, and blew away the enervating atmosphere of the luxurious eating-house with which his garments were filled. He turned to go home, when he met Claude Lantier face to face. The painter, buttoned to the chin in his shabby coat, was in a state of great rage. He swore that his life was that of a dog, and that he would never touch a pencil again, as long as he lived. That afternoon he had kicked a hole through a study he had made of Cadine's head. He was subject to these attacks—common to all artists who feel their inability to execute the works of which they dream. At such times he wandered like a madman through the streets, saw everything through a glass darkly—dreamed that the end of all was at hand; and looked forward to the morrow as to a resurrection.

Florent with difficulty recognized the gay flâneur whom he had met on that memorable morning, on his arrival in Paris, and seen often since. Claude knew his history, and was always cordial when they chanced to meet; but he rarely went to the Quenus'.

"You are still at my Aunt's?" said Claude. "Well! it passes my comprehension how you can stand that smell of cooking. If I stay there an hour, I feel as if I were overfed, and had eaten enough for three days. I made a mistake in going in there to-day. I lost an hour or two."

After a moment's silence, he continued:

"They are good people, too! But they look so well and hearty that they really make me uncomfortable. They wanted me to paint their pictures; but how on earth can I draw faces in which there is not a bone! Aunt Lisa would never have been as silly as I have been to-day; and now I think of it, I don't believe that head was so bad after all!"

Then they talked of Aunt Lisa. Claude said that his mother rarely saw her now. He believed that Lisa was a little ashamed, that her sister should have married a common working man. Besides, she had little sympathy for people who were unfortunate. As for himself, he had had one stroke of luck. A good man had fallen in love with him—a child of eight—and with the animals and figures he drew, and had sent him to school; and when he died, had left him a small yearly income of a thousand francs, which at least prevented him from starving.

"But I wish, nevertheless," he continued, "that I had learned a trade; that of a cabinet-maker, for example. They are a happy class. They have a table to make. They make it, and they go to bed, glad they have finished their work, and perfectly satisfied with it and themselves. Now I never sleep at night. All these confounded studies I have made buzz about in my head. I am never done—never at rest—"

His voice broke. He tried to laugh, and then uttered an oath, trying to find the most atrocious language, with the wild rage of a man, whose nature is delicate and refined, but who feels that he has made a great mistake of life.

Suddenly he stopped short and pointed down into one of the cellars of the Halles, where a gas-light was kept burning continually. He had caught a glimpse of Marjolin and Cadine calmly sleeping. These scamps had found a way to enter these places after the gratings had been put down.

"Now look at that animal," cried Claude. "Did you ever see more perfect animal beauty?" And in the voice of the painter there was a tone of absolute envy. "They are as happy as pigs. They make their supper off of apples, and then they go to sleep in one of those baskets full of chickens' feathers. After all, you have done well, perhaps, to stay at Aunt Lisa's. You can't help growing fat there!"

And he walked off sulkily. Florent went up to his attic, restless and uncertain. The next day he went out early and took a long walk. At breakfast he was greatly comforted by Lisa's gentleness. She spoke of the place which had been offered to him, but very quietly, as of a matter which required consideration. He listened, leaving his untouched plate before him. He was carried away by the dazzling cleanliness of the room, by the softness of the mat under his feet, by the fresh paper and glittering varnish. He wondered what was true, and what was false. Yet he had strength to repeat his refusal, at the same time quite conscious of the bad taste of which he was guilty in making such a brutal display of his resentments and rancor in such a peaceful, comfortable spot as this.

Lisa was not angry. She smiled with that lovely smile which embarrassed Florent even more, than her irritation of the previous evening. At dinner they talked only of the immense amount of labor which would be necessary to get in all their winter stock.

The evenings were now cold. As soon as they had dined, they went into the kitchen, where it was always warm, and so large, that a number of persons could be comfortable there, around a square table, placed in the centre. The walls of the room were covered with plaques of blue faience. On the left was the great furnace, with its three holes, in which stood three pots, blackened with soot and constant use, and further off was a little stove, where all the broiling was done, and above was a row of shelves, on which stood or hung long-handled spoons, strainers, skimmers, colanders, and row upon row of drawers, all labelled, wherein were kept bread-crumbs, coarse and fine; mustard, pepper and salt, spices, cloves and nutmegs. On the right was the chopping-table, an enormous block of oak against the wall, all seamed and scarred, while several machines, whose uses were unknown to a casual observer, stood near by, their wheels and their general aspect giving a look of diabolical mystery to the place. Piles of sauce-pans, of tin and copper, stood in every corner, all delicately clean; small saws and larding needles hung side by side. In spite of the absolute cleanliness of the place, there was a smell of grease which permeated the very walls, and reddened the bricks on the floor, and polished the edges of the chopping-block until

it looked as if it had been varnished. And it seemed as if in this constant evaporation from the three pots, where so many pigs had been boiled, that from every nail in the room and every plank in the wall oozed grease.

The Quenu-Gradelles did everything themselves. They bought nothing, except sardines, cheeses, conserves and pâtés, from a celebrated house. Consequently, September to them was a busy month. They then filled the cellar, which they had emptied during the summer. Quenu, assisted by Auguste and Léon, made his sausages, prepared his hams, and rendered his lard. There was a formidable noise of frying and sizzling—of chopping and pounding, and the smell of cooking filled the whole neighborhood.

The night of which we write it was late—eleven o'clock. Quenu, who had been busy with two huge pots of lard, now occupied himself with the pudding. Auguste was helping him. At the corner of the table, Lisa and Augustine were mending linen, while opposite, Florent was playing with little Pauline—Léon was chopping meat for sausages with slow and regular blows.

Auguste went to the court-yard, and brought in two huge jugs of hogs' blood. It was Auguste who killed the animals at the abattoir, and brought the blood home himself, leaving the carcasses to be dressed and sent home in the regular wagons.

Quenu declared that there was no one in Paris who knew the quality of pig's blood as did Auguste. If Auguste said: "The pudding will be good," the pudding was good.

"How will it be to-night?" asked Lisa.

"I think it will be excellent, Madame. I can tell by the way the blood runs. When I pull out the knife, if the blood runs slowly, it is not a good sign; it shows that the blood is poor—"

"But," interrupted Quenu, "that all depends on how deep you put in the knife."

Auguste's pale, fat face relaxed into a smile.

"No," he answered, "I always put my knife in, three fingers deep—that is the rule. The blood should be thick while it is warm, but not coagulated."

Augustine dropped her needle, and looked at her future husband with fixed attention. Her suffused face, with its close bands of chestnut hair, was full of interest. Even little Pauline listened.

"I beat it up with my hand," continued the young man, moving his fingers as if he were beating a syllabub. "Then I look at my hand, and it must be the same color all over, with a greasy look. Then I say to myself: 'Yes, it will be a good pudding.'"

He looked at his hand complacently. This hand, which was so constantly thrust into buckets of blood, was pink and delicate, with polished nails. Quenu nodded—Léon chopped on—Pauline climbed on her cousin's knees.

"Tell me the story," she cried, "of the gentleman who was eaten by the beasts!"

This talk about the blood had apparently awakened in the child's mind the remembrance of this story.

Florent did not understand, but Lisa laughed.

"Don't you remember what you were telling Gavard one night? The child must have heard you."

Florent became very grave. The child took in her arms the huge yellow cat, and put it on her cousin's knees, saying that Monton wished to hear the story. But Monton jumped on the table, and sat there with back well up, watching the tall, thin man, who for the last two weeks had apparently afforded him much food for reflection.

Pauline kicked and plunged, in her impatience to hear the story.

"Pray, tell her," said Lisa, "and she may let us have some peace!"

Florent sat with his eyes fixed on the ground. He slowly raised them, looked first at the two women placidly sewing, and then at Quenu and Auguste, who were scalding a pot for the pudding. The gas burned evenly—the heat of the furnace was very delightful, and the aspect of the room one of intense comfort.

Florent lifted Pauline, and as he placed her on his knees began to talk to her:

"There was once a very poor man—he was sent far away to the other side of the sea. Upon the ship which took him away, there were four hundred forçats, with whom he was to live five weeks. He was devoured by fleas, and killed by the heat and bad air. Fifty were allowed to go on deck at a time, and two cannons were brought to bear full on them, for no little fear was felt of these men. The poor fellow I am telling you about was very happy when it came his turn—he had lost his

appetite, and could not sleep, and at night when he thought he could not be heard, he wept his eyes out."

Pauline listened, with wide-open eyes, and hands closely folded.

"That is not the story I mean," she said, "not the story of the man who was eaten by the beasts."

"Wait," said Florent, gently, "I am coming to it."

"Go on," murmured the child, in a contented tone; then her little forehead contracted, and with a puzzled air she said:

"But what had the poor man done, that they sent him away in the big boat?"

Lisa and Augustine smiled. The child's quick intelligence delighted them. Lisa took advantage of the circumstance to point a moral. She said that children too were sent away in the boat, if they were not good.

"Then," remarked Pauline, judiciously, "my cousin's poor man was very wise to cry in the night, when no one could see him!"

Lisa lifted her eyebrows, and went on with her sewing. Some onions were slowly frying on the fire, with a contented little noise, like that made by crickets basking in the heat, and Leon had not finished his chopping.

"When they arrived," continued Florent, "they took the man to an island called l'Ile du Diable, and there he found some friends, who had also been driven from their country. They were miserable, and obliged to work like convicts. They were counted three times each day by the guard, to be sure they were all there. At night

they were shut up in a great barn-like building of wood.

"At the end of a year they were nearly naked, and went barefoot. They had built huts out of logs, to shelter them from the heat of the sun, which is terrific there, but the huts could not keep out mosquitoes. Several died, and the others were so thin and yellow that they were enough to frighten any one."

"Auguste, give me the lard," cried Quenu; and when he held the dish, he dropped some of the lard slowly into the pot.

"But didn't they have anything to eat?" asked the child, profoundly interested.

"Yes—they had rice, full of worms, and meat that smelt badly," answered Florent, in a sombre voice. "They had to pick out the worms, to get at the rice, and the meat made them ill."

"But I should sooner have eaten dry bread," said the child, contemplatively.

Léon, having finished his chopping, put the platter containing the sausage-meat on the table. Monton was obliged to move, which he did with a very bad grace. Lisa made no attempt to conceal the disgust she felt; the worms in the rice, and the ill-smelling meat, seemed in her eyes, to dishonor the man who had been compelled to eat them. There was almost a look of terror in her fair face as she contemplated the man who had been exposed to such horrors.

"It was not certainly a delightful spot in which to

reside," said Florent, forgetting the child on his knee, and speaking with intense bitterness.

"Each day there were new vexations, new violations of justice, new contempt for all human decency and charity, which exasperated the prisoners to a fever of vindictive rancor. They lived like wild beasts in a cage, with the whip constantly upheld over them. Such sufferings cannot be forgiven,—nor yet forgotten!"

His voice dropped, and the lard and the onions sizzled gayly. But Lisa was startled at the ferocious expression of his countenance, and wondered if all his gentleness were altogether feigned, and if he were a hypocrite after all.

But this fierce intonation in Florent's voice was delightful to Pauline. She gave a frantic jump on her cousin's knee.

"But the man, cousin; tell me about the man!"

Florent looked down at the little one and smiled sadly.

"The man," he said, "did not like the island, and he determined to cross the sea, to reach the land which could just be seen on fair days. But this was not so easy, for he must build a raft, and where was he to get any wood? The island was fairly stripped, and baked in the hot sun, for all the trees had been cut down for the use of the prisoners. The man finally determined to use the logs of which their huts were constructed, and one evening he and two of his comrades started forth. The wind blew them straight where they wished to go. Day was breaking when their poor raft ran on a sand bank, and came to

pieces. The three poor fellows were in the sand up to their waists, and finally one went down to his chin, and the others pulled him out. With infinite difficulty they reached a rock, where they had barely place to sit. When the sun rose, they saw opposite them a line of bleak rocks. Two, who could swim, determined to make an effort to reach these rocks. They preferred to drown, rather than die of starvation. They promised their companion that if they lived, they would return for him with a boat."

"Ah! now I know," cried Pauline, clapping her hands. "You have got to my story of the gentleman who was eaten by beasts."

"They reached the rocks," continued Florent, "but they were deserted, and they found no boat for four days. When they went back to the sand bank, they found their companion lying there with his feet and hands devoured, his intestines eaten away, and the cavity occupied by crabs, which were eating their way all through the body."

Lisa and Augustine uttered an exclamation of loathing. Léon, who was cutting some thin slivers of pork for the pudding, made a hideous face. Auguste and Quenu were positively ill. Pauline laughed vociferously.

"Give me that blood!" cried Quenu, at last. Auguste brought it, and poured it slowly into the pot, while Quenu stirred vigorously, and when it was all in, took down some spices, the odor of which filled the kitchen.

"They left him there, of course," said Lisa, "and how did they get away?"

"As they came, of course," answered Florent, "but the

wind rose, and the waves were something terrible. The water washed over them, and they emptied the boat with their hands. This lasted for three days, and they had not one mouthful to eat!"

"Three days!" cried Lisa. "Starving for three days!"

"Yes, and when the wind at last changed and drove them to the shore, one was so worn out that he died in a few hours. His companions tried to make him eat the leaves of the trees, as they did themselves."

Here Augustine laughed, and then in her confusion, unwilling that they should think her hard-hearted, she stammered:

"It was not at that, Madame, I laughed. It was at Monton. Look at him, Madame."

Lisa laughed in her turn. Monton had gotten up, stretched his lazy length, and then began to scratch the table furiously, as if he wished to cover up the platter of sausage meat.

He then leisurely turned round, and lay down with half-shut eyes. Then everybody praised Monton. Everybody said that he never stole a mouthful. And Pauline told how after dinner he always licked her fingers.

Lisa came back to the question of how a man could live three days without eating.

"I do not believe it," she said. "It is utterly impossible. I often hear that such and such a person is starving, but it is a mere *façon de parler*. Everybody eats more or less. There may, of course, be occasionally some—"

She was probably about to say "some poor wretch," but she checked herself as she looked at Florent; her eyes clearly said, however, that only utterly disreputable persons could ever be exposed to such contingencies.

Florent felt as if he were choking. The heat of the room was intense, and the smell of cooking overpowering.

"When the man had buried his comrade in the sand," resumed Florent, "he went away all alone. Dutch Guiana, where he was, is a country of forests and rivers. The man wandered about for a week, without seeing a human being. He dared not eat the glowing fruits he saw, for he felt they were poisonous.

"For entire days he walked, under an arch of thickly interwoven branches, with never a gleam of the blue sky above. The green shadows were full of terror. Great birds flew over his head with a rush of wings, and sudden cries, like agonized shrieks. Monkeys chattered above his head, or leaped from branch to branch. Serpents glided among the dry leaves, and he saw slender heads and forked tongues among the monstrous roots. Certain damp corners were heaped high with moving things—black, yellow, brown, like dead leaves—who disappeared with a rustle as he drew near. His nights were full of horror, and he felt stifled among all the trees. The heat, aggravated by the dampness, was intolerable. At last, he beheld the sky again, and stood on the margin of a broad river; huge crocodiles bathed in the sun, but even these were more reassuring than the forests he had passed through. He succeeded in getting across the river, only to

find almost impassable forests again. Then came grassy plains with rank vegetation. Then a marsh in which he sank to his chin. The moon was rising, and after struggling out of the mud, he lay for an hour or two without moving. When, at last, he reached a habitation, he was so pitiable a sight that every one was afraid of him. They threw him something to eat, but the master of the house guarded his door with a gun."

Florent's voice broke; he looked about him. Pauline had fallen asleep after many efforts to keep her eyes open. Quenu had lost his temper.

"Don't you know how to hold a gut?" he cried to Léon. "Will you never learn? Now, stand steady!"

Léon, with his right hand, raised a long empty gut, in the end of which a wide funnel had been placed. Quenu filled the gut and pressed in the mixture he had prepared, tied strings around both ends and dropped it into the pot. Lisa looked on with great interest at this operation, and her husband sighed with relief that his labors were at last over.

"And the man—the man!" murmured little Pauline, opening her eyes in surprise, missing the sounds of her cousin's voice.

Florent rocked her on his knee, and went on as if he were an old nurse.

"And then the man got to a great town, where he was at first supposed to be an escaped convict, and was put in prison for several months. When he was released, he tried to find employment; he taught children to read, and

did any little things he could. This man was determined to go home to his own country, and had saved his money for that, when he was taken down by yellow fever. They thought him dead, and they divided his clothes, and when he was better, he had not a shirt to put on. He was compelled to begin at the beginning. The man was very sick, but he got better, the man got well, and the man got away."

Florent's voice grew lower and lower, and at last became inaudible, though his pale lips continued to move. Pauline still slept, lulled by his voice, and her head rested on the shoulder of her cousin, who held her in his arms, and rocked her to and fro, in a sweet and tender sort of way.

It was time now for Quenu to take out the puddings. This he did with a stick, and carried them one by one into the court-yard, where he hung them all up to dry. Léon helped him, holding the ends of the puddings when they were very long. The steam coming from the kettles which Quenu had left uncovered, filled the kitchen, and Lisa and Augustine were as oppressed as if they had eaten too hearty a meal.

Augustine carried Pauline up-stairs. Quenu, who liked to shut up the kitchen himself, dismissed Auguste and Léon. The apprentice went off sulkily, for he had stolen half a yard of pudding which he intended to broil. Then the Quenus and Florent remained alone and silent. Lisa eat a mouthful or two of the pudding.

"It is good," she said, "excellent! I wonder what La Normande will say about this?"

Some one knocked, and Gavard came in. He always remained with Monsieur Lebigre until midnight. He had now come for a positive reply, in regard to the position he had obtained for Florent.

"Monsieur Valoque," he said, "can wait no longer; he is really too ill. Florent must decide. I have promised an answer to-morrow at an early hour."

"Florent accepts," said Lisa, quietly, taking another nibble at her pudding.

Florent in vain tried to protest.

"No, no," continued Lisa, "you have suffered enough, my dear Florent. You make me shudder when you tell such terrible stories. It is time that you settle down. You belong to an honorable family; you have received a good education, and it really is not proper to roam the streets like a beggar. You are too old for such childishness. You have sown your wild oats, and they are forgotten and forgiven. You must return to the position to which you are entitled, and live like the rest of us."

Florent listened, but in his astonishment, could not find a word to say. She was right, of course; how could she be otherwise, this woman, with her healthy, tranquil face? He, of course, was the one in the wrong; he with his bent figure and emaciated countenance. He wondered even, that he had dreamed of resistance.

But she continued lecturing him in a maternal fashion, and bringing forward the most convincing arguments.

"Do this for us, Florent," she said; "we are looked up to here in the Quartier, and I am afraid that people are

beginning to chatter. This place will make them hold their tongues, and you will be an honor to us."

She became caressing; a gentle lassitude took possession of Florent. He was weighed down, so to speak, by the substantial odors with which the air of the kitchen was laden. He was carried away by the comfort and plenitude of the life he had lived for the last fortnight, and the bitterness he had felt, his keen indignation, and burning desire for vengeance were smouldering. He seemed to have no other aim, than to spend a series of just such evenings all through life. But it was Monton after all who turned the scales. Monton slept so profoundly with his tail curled up against his back, and looked so deliciously happy, that Florent murmured, as he looked at him:

"And why not, after all? I accept, Gavard; yes, I accept."

Then Lisa finished her pudding, and dried her fingers. She lighted a candle for her brother-in-law, and stood with it in her hand, the light falling on her lovely face, which had all the tranquillity of a sacred Cow.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE HANDSOME FISH-WOMAN.

THREE days later, and all was arranged. The city government accepted the temporary substitute offered by Monsieur Valoque without question.

When Florent first presented himself at the Préfecture, Gavard volunteered to go with him, and when he was with Florent again in the street, he gave the latter several jocose digs in the side, and winked impetuously. The policemen all seemed to him a huge joke, for as he passed them, he drew down the corners of his mouth, as if it were with difficulty that he repressed a laugh.

The next day Monsieur Valoque initiated his successor in the details of his duties, and for several mornings, guided him through the turbulent little world, wherein he was now to spend his days.

"This poor Valoque," as Gavard called him, was a small, sickly-looking man, with a perpetual cough; wrapped up in flannel, and with a silk handkerchief around his throat, he tottered about the markets with the aid of a cane.

The first morning Florent was literally deafened by the noise. Around the auction benches crowded the retail dealers, while the employés arrived with their registers, and the agents of the shippers, carrying huge leather

bags over their shoulders, sat waiting with their chairs tipped up on their back legs against the wall. The fish was unpacked in the little enclosure, while along the sidewalk there were perpetual arrivals of small instalments—bags dripping with water were perpetually pitched down. Men were hastily tearing off the straw from the crates, and emptying them, and rearranging the contents on the shallow baskets in the most advantageous manner. It seemed to Florent that a whole school of fish had backed up against the wall; their shining scales, and pearly oysters and violet-tinted mussels recalled all the soft tints of the ocean.

The sea had given up all its treasures—cod, sword fish, plaice, mud fish, of a dirty gray, with white spots; eels, deep blue in tone, with narrow, black eyes—skates, whose white bellies were bordered with pale pink, and along the back of which, on the protruding spine, up to the gills, were dashes of cinnabar, striped with Florentine bronze, and fading off into the dark brown of a toad—hound fish, with their horrible heads—their mouths, huge, like Chinese idols—their short wings, like those of bats—monsters, who guard marine grottos.

At last came the fine, handsome fish, each alone, on an osier tray; salmon of rosy silver, every scale of which looked as if touched by a graver's tool; mullets, with larger scales; turbots, and brills, white and firm as curdled milk; tunnies, smooth and varnished like black leather; soles panted on all sides, gray and white; herring with their bloody gills; fat gold fish, spotted with carmine;—

while mackerel, their backs marked with brownish green, and their bellies like mother-of-pearl, lay with heads all toward the centre of the basket. There were also sur-mullets, red dashed with brown; boxes of whiting, reflecting the light like opals—baskets of smelts, clean little baskets, as pretty as baskets of strawberries—rosy shrimp—gray prawns—lobsters, spotted with black, still living, and reaching out their claws in a helpless sort of fashion.

Florent listened to the explanations of Monsieur Valoque. A streak of sunshine came athwart the scene, lighting up all the lovely hues of these strange creatures. It was as if some sea-nymph had opened all her jewel caskets and thrown them pell-mell on the ground—necklaces and bracelets, fantastic ornaments of all kinds, heaped in one rich mass. But Florent caught a breath of the salt sea, with which he was familiar. He remembered that long Guiana coast. He remembered a bay, where, at low tide, the sea-weeds lay uncovered, and smoked in the sunshine, when the high rocks were drying, and the wind blew strong from over the sea toward him. The fresh fish exhaled this same keen smell.

Monsieur Valoque coughed. The dampness struck to his lungs, and he pulled the handkerchief over his mouth.

"Now," he said, "we will go on to the fresh-water fish."

This was the last toward la Rue Rambuteau, where stood immense tanks, supplied by faucets with fresh water, in slender threads. In each tank there was a moving mass. Here Monsieur Valoque coughed more. The

dampness was as great, but there was a smell of moisture and of wet earth.

The amount of crabs from Germany, in boxes and baskets, was very large that morning; while fish from Holland and England overcrowded the market. There were carp from the Rhine, which were beautiful, with their bronze, metallic glitter, and scales like Cloisonné enamel; huge pike—those brigands of the river—in their steel-gray garb; tench—sombre and magnificent—like red copper, spotted with verdigris. There were trout and white bait.

Large baskets of young carp were being emptied into the tank. The fish turned over, lay still a moment, and then swam gayly off. Bags of small eels were turned out, falling in one huge, solid mass, while the bigger ones disentangled themselves, and slipped away with the supple movements of an adder, hiding among the bushes. Fish were lying on the flat osier baskets, who had been slowly dying ever since the morning. They gasped and opened their mouths as if to drink in all the humidity of the air, while their sides shook with an occasional hiccough. Meanwhile, Monsieur Valoque took Florent further on, all the time talking, and giving him the needed information.

The crowd around the wire enclosures, where sat the employés with their registers, on high stools, was rapidly becoming more dense.

Florent was taken within one of these wire enclosures where sat the agent of the Municipal Custom-House,

making entries in a huge book. Lower down were two women writing at their small desks; they kept the tallies. The cashier was a stout woman who had piles of silver and copper before her.

"There are two controllers here," said Valoque; "one representing the Préfecture of the Seine, the other that of the Préfecture of the Police; the latter nominates the factors, and pretends to oversee them. The Administration of the City affects only those transactions on which they levy a tax."

He continued to talk in his little, cold voice, and had much to say of the quarrels of these two officials. Florent did not listen. He was looking at a woman who sat at one of the desks. She was a brunette about thirty, with a dignified, handsome face. She was writing, and held her pen like a lady. He at that moment heard the crier, who held up a magnificent turbot:

"Thirty francs!" he said, "thirty francs!"

He repeated these two words in every imaginable tone. He was a humpback, and wore a blue apron; he waved his arms wildly.

"Thirty-one! thirty-two! thirty-two fifty—!"

He stopped to take breath, and pushed the osier basket forward. Some of the fish-women leaned over and lightly touched the turbot. Then off the man went again, seeing the smallest sign made by a bidder—uplifted eyebrows, parted lips, or a wink; and that with such rapidity, that Florent, who could not follow him, was perfectly astonished when the hunchback chanted:

"Forty-two! forty-two! Going at forty-two!"

It was la belle Normande who made the last bid. Florent saw her standing in the centre of the row of fish-women. The morning was cool, and there was a great display of big white aprons and stout frames. The high chignon and crimps, the fresh clean skin of la belle Normande, made her very conspicuous among the bushy heads with colored handkerchiefs knotted about them, and faces with swollen noses and impudent eyes.

She had seen Madame Quenu's cousin, and was greatly surprised at his being there.

The auctioneer continued to sell the fish, while the brunette wrote on rapidly.

"That man is magnificent," said Monsieur Valoque, with a smile. "He is the best seller in the market. Bless your heart! he would make you buy the soles of his boots, for a pair of fish of the same name!"

He said, as he passed the tanks of fresh-water fish, that if France did not take some active measures, her rivers and lakes would soon be depopulated.

An auctioneer was here selling the eels and crabs by the lot.

The crowd grew larger. Valoque did his duty as Inspector most conscientiously; he pushed his way through the crowd, until he reached the spot where the most rapid bidding was going on. The larger purchasers were there with their porters, ready to carry away the choice fish they bought. There was also an occasional respectable bourgeois, who, tempted by the prospect of a

fresh fish for breakfast, had come down to the market at four o'clock, and to his great amazement found himself the unintentional owner of forty or fifty francs worth of sea-food, which, after it was knocked down, he was compelled to entreat his friends to take off his hands. There was no little quarrelling among the crowd, and also rude elbowing. Florent at last said he had seen enough, and as he emerged from the crowd, he found himself face to face with "La belle Normande." She said to Monsieur Valoque, with her "*air de reine:*"

"Then it is quite settled, sir; you leave us, do you?"

"Yes," answered the little man. "I am going into the country for a while—to Clamart. And this is the gentleman who takes my place."

La belle Normande was dumbfounded, and as Florent went away, he thought he heard her say in the ear of one of her friends:

"Now we will have some fun!"

Florent regretted already that he had yielded to Lisa's entreaties. As soon, indeed, as he was in the open air, and shaken himself clear of the sleepy influence of the kitchen, he accused himself of miserable cowardice almost with tears in his eyes. But he dared not retract his promise, for he was a little afraid of Lisa. He had detected a certain compression of the lips, which boded ill for him should he venture to do this.

Gavard inspired him with an idea that was not without its consolation. He confided to him that Valoque—"the

poor devil"—needed money so much, that it would be a real act of charity to allow him to keep a certain amount of the salary. Florent accepted this proposal with joy. It seemed only right in his eyes. Besides, he really needed so little himself, as he slept and eat with his brother. Gavard said that from the monthly salary of a hundred and fifty francs, it would be as well to offer Valoque fifty. It could not be for very long after all, as the poor man was in a galloping consumption. It was agreed that Florent should make the arrangement with the wife, to avoid hurting Valoque's pride.

Florent assented, but demanded a promise from the poultry-vendor that no one should know of this; and as Gavard also stood in wholesome terror of Lisa, he kept the secret in a most meritorious way.

At last every one at the eating-shop was content. "La belle Lisa" was more friendly than ever to her brother-in-law. She sent him to bed early, that he might wake in season. She gave him a hot breakfast, and was not ashamed to talk with him on the sidewalk, now that he wore an official cap. Quenu was charmed that things were going so smoothly. They sat over their dinner often until nine o'clock, while Augustine was in charge of the counter. During this time there was much gossip and many positive judgments uttered by the pork merchant and his wife.

Florent was questioned about what went on at market, and he soon began to enjoy the regularity of this dull but comfortable life.

But Gavard declared that the Quenu-Gradelles' interior was too sleepy. He forgave Lisa for her tenderness to the Emperor, because he said it was foolish ever to talk politics with a woman. He preferred to spend his evenings with Monsieur Lebigre, where he met friends "with opinions," and he insisted on Florent, now that he was made Inspector, going with him.

Monsieur Lebigre had a fine establishment, with all modern luxuries. It stood at the opposite corner of la Rue Pirouette, and was flanked with four small Norway pines, in green boxes, and made a worthy pendant to the eating-house of the Quenu-Gradelles. The large panes of glass allowed a full view of the interior, papered in pale green, and garlanded with grape vines. The floor was in squares of black and white marble. A winding staircase, curtained with red, led to the billiard room below.

But the counter on the right was very imposing with its display of silver. Gas-lamps, to keep wine and punch hot, were at one end, and at the other was a marble fountain, much ornamented, from which fell so continuous a stream of water that it looked almost as if it, too, were carved. Green bottles were cooling in the water, while whole armies of glasses, arranged in different sizes, were near at hand—small ones for brandy, thick goblets, absinthe glasses, and saucers for brandied fruits. Tall vases served to hold any number of spoons.

Generally, Monsieur Lebigre was enthroned behind the counter on an arm-chair, covered with red leather. Close at his hand were liqueurs, in decanters of cut glass—jars

of brandied fruits, cherries, prunes and peaches, and between piles of toothsome biscuit, were bottles filled with mysterious liqueurs like extracts from flowers, so delicate were their hues of pale pink and clear yellow. These bottles looked as if they were suspended in the air, as the strong, white light of the gas fell upon them.

To give to his establishment the air of a Café, Monsieur Lebigre had placed opposite the counter against the wall, two small tables and four chairs. A chandelier, with five burners and polished globes, hung from the ceiling. A round-faced clock was on the left. There was in the rear a private room, which had one window looking on la Rue Pirouette. In the evening it was lighted by gas. It was in this secluded retreat, that Gavard and his political friends met, after their dinner, every evening. They considered themselves thoroughly at home there, and no one was ever allowed to usurp their places, or to intrude upon them.

The first day Gavard gave some little account of Monsieur Lebigre to Florent. He was a good man—an excellent man. They had heard him say that he had suffered in '48. He might seem stupid, but he was not; and these gentlemen, as they passed his counter, gave him a hearty shake of the hand, over his glasses and decanters. Often by his side sat a little woman—a girl whom he had taken as his assistant. She was called Rose, and was sweet and submissive. Gavard, with a wink, insinuated to Florent, that she carried her submission to a very great length with the proprietor. Nevertheless, all these

gentlemen liked to be served by Rose, who went in and out as quietly as a shadow, and seemed not to hear a word of their most stormy political discussions.

The day that Gavard was to present Florent to his friends, they beheld, on entering the private room, an individual of about fifty, with a doubtful hat and a much-worn brown coat. His chin was resting on an ivory-headed cane, and his mouth was so buried in a full beard that his face seemed destitute of lips.

"How are you, Robine?" asked Gavard.

Robine silently extended his hand. He did not speak, and hardly winked. He replaced his chin on his cane, and earnestly inspected Florent, who had sworn Gavard to secrecy in regard to his story, and was now disposed to believe that this promise had been broken, and that this gentleman distrusted him. But he was mistaken. Never did Robine talk more than this. He was always the first to enter the room, and sat invariably in the same corner, without once laying down his cane. He sat listening to the others, drinking only the one glass, and that so imperceptibly that it lasted until midnight. When Florent some time later questioned Gavard on Robine, he was told that this person was very shrewd, but no reasons were given, and no instances cited of this marvellous shrewdness. It was roundly asserted, however, that he was one of the men of the Opposition most dreaded by the government. He lived in la Rue St. Denis, but no one was ever known to have entered his rooms. Gavard stoutly asseverated that on one memorable occasion he had done so, and had seen

highly waxed floors, and an alabaster clock, with columns. Madame Robine, whose back only he had seen as he went in, was very "*comme il faut*," and wore English curls, unless he was greatly mistaken. The ménage was a peculiar one. The husband had no business apparently; he spent his days no one knew where; lived no one knew how, but appeared among them regularly each evening.

"Have you seen this Address from the Throne?" said Gavard, taking up a journal from the table.

Robine shrugged his shoulders, but the door opened wide, and a hunchback entered—the hunchback from the market; a very different-looking person he was now, however.

"Ah! here comes Logre," said the poultry-vendor. "He will tell us all the news, and what he thinks of the speech from the Throne."

But Logre threw down his hat furiously, and, as he seated himself, gave a pound on the table with his fist.

"Do you think I read their blasted lies?" he cried. The hunchback was evidently much out of humor. He soon found a victim.

"Rose! Rose!" he called, going to the door of the cabinet.

And when the young woman appeared, all in a tremble, he said:

"Why do you stand looking at me? You saw me come in, and yet you do not trouble yourself to see what I want."

Rose humbly apologized, received the orders from Logre

and the other two men, who soon had their glasses at their side.

"Where is Charvet?" said one.

"Waiting for Clémence outside," was the reply.

But Charvet appeared. He was a tall, bony fellow, who lived near the Luxembourg. His hair was long, and thrown back from his forehead. He talked with a rapid flow of words, which were so long and so erudite that his adversaries were generally floored. Gavard was afraid of him, though he would not acknowledge it, even to himself, and always said, when Charvet was not there, that he was utterly unendurable. Robine approved all that was said only with his eyelids. Logre was the only one in the little group who ventured to argue with this authoritative personage. He and Clémence had lived together as man and wife for ten years, and as Florent looked at the young woman, he at last remembered where he had seen her. She was the brunette whom he had seen writing in the fish-market.

Rose appeared on the heels of the new-comers. She placed a glass before Clémence, also a plate, with a lemon cut in halves. Clémence mixed her glass of grog herself, pressing the lemon with a spoon, and holding the decanter of rum up to the light, to see that she did not take too much.

Gavard presented Florent to these gentlemen, with an especial recommendation to Charvet. He said that they were both clever men, who would understand each other. They all shook hands with the new-comer in a peculiar

sort of way, suggestive of the Masonic grip. Charvet showed himself quite amiable.

"Have you received your pay to-day?" asked Logre of Clémence.

She said "Yes," and opened her pocket-book, and showed it to him, full of silver.

"We must settle our accounts," he said, in a low voice.

"Certainly, to-night. I have breakfasted with you four times; but then, you know, I lent you five francs last week."

Florent in surprise turned away his head, lest he should hear what was not intended for him.

Clémence sipped her glass and leaned back against the wall, and listened to the men talking politics.

Gavard took up the paper and read in a manner which he attempted to make comic, disjointed fragments from the speech from the Throne, spoken that morning at the opening of the Chambers. One phrase amused him excessively:

"We are confident, gentlemen, relying as we do on your enlightened views, and on the conservative sentiments of the country, that we shall see the daily growth of public prosperity."

Logre repeated this phrase, and even imitated the nasal twang of the Emperor.

"Prosperity is a very nice thing," said Charvet, "but there is a good deal of starvation now-a-days."

"Business is at a stand-still," muttered Gavard.

The discussion grew quite violent. The Legislative body

was handled without gloves. Logre became quite excited, stood up, and gesticulated in much the same attitude in which he stood in the market, and sold off a fine turbot.

Charvet was quite reserved, and smoked his pipe steadily. When he did speak, his voice rang through the room. Robine nodded an assent without taking his chin from the ivory of his cane. Finally the conversation turned upon women.

"Women," said Charvet, "are the equals of men. There should be, consequently, no inseparable bonds to bind them together. It should be a mere business partnership. You agree with me, Clémence?"

"Evidently," she answered, with her head against the wall, and her eyes half closed.

Florent saw, through the half-open door, Mademoiselle Saget at the counter. She had drawn a bottle from under her apron, and watched Rose, as the latter filled it with a mixture of raspberry cordial and brandy. The bottle was handed to Mademoiselle Saget, who then quickly concealed it under her apron, and lingered to chat a little. The establishment that night was especially brilliant, and the old maid in her scanty black skirts was a strange blemish on the scene. Florent fancied she had seen him, for ever since he had first entered the Halles, she had been at his heels—he had often seen her with Madame Lecœur or La Sarriette, watching him stealthily. His appointment as Inspector seemed to astonish these women greatly.

Mademoiselle Saget said a few words to Rose, and then turned to a table near the door of the private room, where Monsieur Lebigre was playing piquet with a customer.

"Shut the door, Florent," said Gavard, roughly, who detested the old maid. Lacaille, who had joined the group, meekly obeyed.

At midnight, when the conference broke up, Lacaille said a few words in a low voice to Lebigre, who, as he shook hands with him, slipped four five-franc pieces into his hand, and whispered:

"You know—it is twenty-two francs to-morrow. Do not forget also that you owe three days for the carriage. Let everything be paid up."

Monsieur Lebigre wished these gentlemen good-night. He was sleepy, he said, and his yawn disclosed his strong white teeth. He bade Rose put out the gas in the private room, and turned away.

Gavard was a little tipsy, and stumbled as he went out. Florent left him at his own door, and went up to his attic, which he had learned to like very much. Augustine's presence still lingered in the room. On the chimney were a hair-pin or two, a box of gilt pasteboard, containing buttons and pastelles, an empty pomade pot which smelt of jasmine. In the table drawer were a prayer-book, some needles and pins, a spool of cotton—also a tumbled copy of "A Key to Dreams."

A summer dress, white with yellow spots, hung on a nail behind the door, while on the board, which did duty as a washstand, behind the water-pitcher, was a dark spot where a bottle of bandoline had been tipped over. Florent was amused by the childishness of the "Key to Dreams" and the gilt boxes; they took him back to his own youth.

He forgot Augustine, and fancied himself occupying the room of a dear sister, who had left behind her, something of her feminine presence.

He liked, too, to lean out of the window of his attic. To this window was attached a narrow balcony with iron railings, where Augustine had kept a box of flowers, which Florent, now that the nights had grown chilly, took into the house. He would remain for an hour or more looking out, and enjoying the fresh air, which came from the Seine over the houses in la Rue de Rivoli. Below were the confused masses of the market roofs; above, a broad glimpse of the open sky. Here he thought, with mingled pain and pleasure, of the despairing years he had spent out of France.

At last, with a shiver, he would close his window, and as he took off his coat, feel that the eyes of the photographs of Auguste and Augustine were following his every movement. The first weeks of Florent's new employment were very painful. He found a certain covert hostility; the belle Normande had sworn to avenge herself on "La belle Lisa," and "the cousin" was a good opportunity.

The Mehudens had come from Rouen. The old mother still told, how she had arrived in Paris with a few eels in a basket. She married an employé at the Custom House, who died, leaving her the mother of two little girls. It was she, who, by her full figure and resplendent skin, had won the title of "La belle Normande," which her daughter had inherited.

The old woman had grown immensely stout and had

never renounced the fashions of her youth. She still wore a dress of a large-figured material, and a yellow fichu—the traditional costume of fish-women, and had also preserved the loud voice, and arms akimbo—and had the slang of the fish-market at the end of her tongue. She mourned over the loss of the Marché des Innocents, spoke of the former rights of the *Dames des Halles*, and told of visits paid to the market by the Court in the reign of Charles X. and of Louis Philippe, the ladies in silk dresses, and with flowers in their hands. Mother Mehuden, as she was called, had been for a long time the bearer of the banner, in the Association of the Virgin. In the processions in the church, she wore a tulle cap, with satin ribbons, and held aloft with her swollen hands the golden standard, from which floated a richly figured flag, on which was embroidered a Virgin.

Mother Mehuden, it was rumored, had made a great fortune. The two sisters were not especially good friends. The youngest, Claire, an indolent blonde, had many complaints to make of her sister, Louise. The mother surrendered her own stall to Louise, and installed Claire among the fresh-water fish, and, although she called herself out of the business, she wandered about the markets all day.

Claire was a whimsical creature, very gentle, and yet always in a quarrel with those about her. She was quietly obstinate and wilful, with not the smallest idea of justice. She often revolutionized the market, making the prices higher or lower, as she pleased, without being able to say why herself.

She was nearly thirty, and was beginning to grow a little heavy, but at twenty-two she looked as Claude Lantier had said, like a Murillo, and a most untidy Murillo, too, with her slip-shod shoes, and her dress cut as if by a hatchet. She was not in the least coquettish, and was indeed quite contemptuous, when Louise appeared in her ribbons. It was said that the son of a rich bookseller in the Quartier, had gone to a foreign land in despair at not being able to obtain a good word from her. Louise—La belle Normande—was much more tender-hearted. She was on the point of marrying an employé in the wheat market, when the poor fellow's back was broken by the fall of a load of flour. Nevertheless, she had a child some few months later, and was politely spoken of as "a widow." The old fish-woman often said "when my son-in-law was living."

These Mehudens were a power in the Halles. When Monsieur Valoque had given Florent every possible aid, he gently intimated that he must manage several among the market-women, if he wished to live in peace. He even suggested that an occasional little present would be by no means amiss.

An Inspector is both a police officer, and a Justice of the peace, keeping order, and conciliating the differences arising between purchaser and seller. Florent, unfitted by nature to play this rôle, went too far, whenever he exercised his authority, and then, too, his constrained manner and sad face were much against him.

The tactics of La belle Normande was to draw him into

some quarrel, as she had sworn that he should not keep his position a fortnight.

"If that fat Lisa thinks we are going to take up with her leavings, she is greatly mistaken! The man is hideous. We have more taste than she."

After the morning auctions, when Florent went through the markets, he saw perfectly well that La belle Normande wished to insult him. When he passed her stall, she laughed immoderately, and generally turned the water from the faucets over the alley.

Florent pretended not to see or hear. One morning, however, war was declared. That day, when Florent reached the stall occupied by La belle Normande, he perceived a most intolerable odor. He saw fine salmon, rosy perch, turbots as white as cream, mullets, and soles, and among these fish, whose eyes were still bright, was a large skate, which was putrid, and the flesh falling from the bones.

"That skate must be thrown away," said Florent, going up to the stall.

La belle Normande laughed insolently. He looked at her. Never had he seen her so gorgeous. She seemed unusually tall, as she stood on a box, to protect her feet from the dampness. Her hair was carefully dressed, and a gold chain hung over her breast, and long gold rings from her ears.

He repeated, quietly, "This skate cannot remain here."

He had not noticed Mother Mehuden, who was sitting on a chair in the corner. She rose, and, coming forward, she leaned with her hands on the marble slab.

"And why?" said she. "Why should she throw this fish away? Will you pay her for it?"

Then Florent saw that he was in for it, and realized that a spirit of insubordination was let loose among these people. He controlled himself, beckoned to one of the porters, who carried the barrow for refuse, picked up the skate himself, and threw it in. Mother Mehuden put her arms akimbo with a defiant air, and La belle Normande laughed again, as Florent walked away. Each day there was a new invention. The Inspector was obliged to watch what was going on about him, as if he had been in an enemy's land. One morning, when he ran to separate two women, who were quarrelling, he was near receiving full in his face a quantity of small fish, which were certainly thrown at him. He at once concluded that the quarrel was a farce, acted for the benefit of La belle Normande, who sneered aloud. His old training as a teacher armed him with angelic patience. He knew how to preserve an appearance of impassibility, even when he was boiling with indignation. But none of his pupils were as ferocious as these women, whose enormous busts shook with laughter when he was taken in some new snare.

Gavard would have enjoyed all this, and would have fought his way through in triumph, but Florent was always more or less intimidated by women, and the rough coarseness of these especial ones was intensely disagreeable to him.

He had one friend among them all, and this was Claire. She declared that she liked the new Inspector, and greeted him always with a cordial smile. He very often saw her

with her blonde hair curling on her neck and on her temples, and her skirts carelessly tucked up as she dabbled in her tanks, and gave fresh water to her fish. He always thought of pictures he had seen of bathers on a river-side, with their clothes loosely huddled about them.

One morning she was particularly amiable. She called the Inspector to see an enormous eel, that had astonished the whole market. She lifted the grating she had prudently laid over the top of the tank, at the bottom of which the eel seemed to sleep.

"Wait a moment," she said, "I will show you."

She softly put her arm in—an arm that was a little thin, on which the blue veins stood out on the satiny skin. When the eel was touched, it rolled over.

Claire said she had always been afraid of eels, and could never bear to touch them, but now she had learned to hold them so they could not slip away; and she leaned over the tank, and let the water drip from her fingers.

"I must show you my carp," she said, suddenly; and opening another tank, she lifted out a superb creature.

"They do not bite," she said, with her sweet smile. "But I am afraid of crabs."

As she said this, she took from a box near by a crab; but cautious as she was, the creature evidently took a stronger nip than she anticipated, for she grew very red, and broke off the claw angrily, although she did not cease to smile.

"I would never trust a pike though; they will take off your fingers as with a knife."

And she pointed to a long row of pike, arranged by their sizes. The air was full of odors like those rising from a pond wherein grow water-lilies and tall reeds. She dried her hands on her apron and smiled again.

Claire's sympathy was but a small consolation to Florent, for it only attracted a great deal of observation, and caused many disagreeable remarks, whenever he stopped near her stall.

The revolt in the market became each day more decided. Florent would have left the market, but for his fear of seeming a coward in Lisa's eyes.

"I would soon bring them to their senses!" said she, one day after dinner. "You are wrong to be so mild, Florent. Take a decided step, and you will soon bring them to terms."

One morning Madame Taboureau's cook was in the fish-market looking for a barbel.

"Come and see me," said La belle Normande, "and I can find you something. Just lift that," she continued, laying in the woman's hand a barbel, wrapped in yellow paper.

The servant regretfully said:

"But how much is it?"

"Fifteen francs," answered the fish-woman.

The servant laid the fish down, and turned away.

"What will you give, then? Name your price."

"No, no! It is too dear. I can't give more than eight francs."

Then Mother Mehuden came to the fore. "Did the

woman think they had stolen their fish?" And La belle Normande turned away her head. The woman came back, and offered nine and then ten francs; and as she was going away for good, the belle Normande called out:

"Well! then, give me the money."

The cook stood talking with Mother Mehuden. Madame Taboureau was so particular. She had company to dinner that day—a cousin from Blois—a lawyer and his wife.

"You are going to clean that fish, are you not?" she said, interrupting herself.

La belle Normande emptied the fish with one quick movement of her fingers—wiped the sand out under the gills, and laid the fish in the cook's basket.

"There now," she said, gayly, "you are all right."

In fifteen minutes the cook was back. She had been crying. She threw the fish on the marble slab, showing a great tear in the belly. A flood of tears choked her words.

"Madame Taboureau won't have it. She says she can't use it, and that I am a fool who allows myself to be robbed by everybody. I did not turn it over. I trusted you. Give me back my ten francs."

Mother Mehuden rose in her wrath.

"Do you think," she said, "that we shall take it back? You must have let the fish fall."

The servant burst into tears.

"You are two thieves," she sobbed, "just as my mistress said."

The mother and daughter were furious, and the little cook sobbed still harder.

"Your mistress would like us to mend this for her, I suppose," sneered La belle Normande.

Florent arrived in the height of this quarrel, which had attracted all the women from the various stalls. As soon as he heard the story, he promptly said:

"Give back the ten francs to this woman."

But Mother Mehuden meant to go the length of her rope.

"Of course," she cried, "and this is the way I shall give them to her!" And the old woman flung the fish full in the little cook's face.

This was too much for Florent. Even La belle Normande was thunderstruck as he exclaimed:

"I shall withdraw your permit for a week!"

And as he heard a loud hiss behind him, he turned with so threatening an air, that even La belle Normande was afraid, and recoiled.

When the Mehudens had returned the ten francs, he closed the stall. The old woman was choking with rage, while her daughter was cold and white. Could it be possible that she, La belle Normande, was ignominously turned out of her stall!

Claire said, quite audibly, "that it served her right," which led to a fierce quarrel that night between the two sisters.

At the end of a week, when the Mehudens returned to the market, they were very quiet and silent. But from this time La belle Normande cherished the hope of some terrible revenge.

She felt that the blow came to her through Lisa, who had given her so triumphant a glance the day after the battle, that her rival swore she should pay dearly for it.

Her child was growing up in the fish-market, at home in every corner of it, and among the shining mackerel and perch. His favorite amusement, when his mother's back was turned, was to build walls and houses with the herring; he also drew them up in line-of-battle on the marble slab, imitated a trumpet with his lips, and then pushed them all together in a pile, crying out that they were dead. Then he tormented his Aunt Claire, and did his best to drown himself in her tank. At seven he was the idol of the fish-market, and did precisely as he pleased.

When they showed him something, which he considered absolutely entrancing, he would clasp his hands, and say:

"Ah! it is too much!"

And the name of Much clung to him. Much was here, Much was there and everywhere; he loved the running water like any fish, and paddled about in it all the time, often stealthily opening a faucet, overjoyed at the spurting forth of the water; and his mother would pick him up many times in the day, wet through and through, and blue with cold. Much, at seven, was as beautiful a child as was ever seen. His chestnut hair lightly waved; his eyes were as blue as Forget-me-nots. All the frightful language of the Halles fell naturally from the lips which looked so pure. He would put his arms akimbo and imitate his grandmother to perfection—all the time looking like the

smiling Christ on the knees of the Virgin. The fish-women nearly killed themselves laughing, and he, thus encouraged, generally wound up his sentences with an oath. But he was charming, because he was ignorant of the enormity of the words he uttered.

Winter came. Much was very chilly that year, and took a great fancy to the Inspector's office, which was furnished with a table, an iron safe, a sofa, two arm-chairs, and a stove. It was by this stove, that Much delighted to establish himself. Florent adored children, and whenever he saw the boy wistfully looking through the window, he bade him enter.

The first words uttered by Much, astonished him somewhat.

"It is devilish cold," he said, in his baby voice. And then with a laugh, which sounded like water running out of a narrow-necked bottle, he added:

"Do you really go every night, to warm my Aunt Claire's feet?"

Florent found a strange fascination in this child. La belle Normande did not interfere, although she was herself very reserved; and Florent cherished the idea finally, of bringing the little fellow up in a better way. He fancied himself back again with his brother Quenu, in the old room in la Rue Royer-Collard.

He found infinite pleasure in the companionship of this young creature, to whom he taught the alphabet at once. Much showed the quick intelligence of the child of Parisian streets. He liked to look at pictures. He liked

the warmth of the stove, on which he could roast potatoes and chestnuts. But of this last he soon wearied, and he stole from his Aunt Claire white bait, which he hung on a string, and eat when roasted without bread. One day he brought a carp, but this was too much for Florent, who put an end to the cooking. At the end of two months, Much could read, and his copy-book was by no means bad.

In the evening, at home, the child talked incessantly of his dear friend Florent, who could draw trees and men in huts. The Normande therefore lived, so to speak, in the intimate companionship of the man whom she would gladly have strangled. She went so far one day, as to lock Much in, that he might not go to his friend's, but the child wailed so vociferously, that she was glad to let him out.

She was in reality anything but firm, in spite of her determined airs, and when the child told her how happy he had been, she felt a vague sensation of gratitude.

And later she was more moved, when he read to her a paragraph from a newspaper, which had wrapped a loaf of bread, and by degrees she came to the conclusion, though she did not say so, that perhaps Florent was not such a bad man after all. She felt for him a certain respect and no small curiosity. She therefore suddenly decided that it would be much better fun to be amiable to "the cousin" than to quarrel with him, "and would make the fat Lisa much madder."

"What does your friend say of me?" she asked Much, one morning, as she was dressing him.

"Nothing at all."

"Well, then, tell him I am much obliged for his teaching you to read."

Henceforward the child always had a message to carry from the Inspector to his mother, or from his mother to the Inspector. La belle Normande walked into the Inspector's office one day, while Much was taking his writing lesson. She was very gentle and very complimentary, while Florent was far more embarrassed than she. They talked only of the child. As there was some difficulty in continuing the lessons at the office, she asked him to come to her in the evening. Then there was some question on her part of remuneration, which he promptly refused. She laughed, and said that she should pay with her finest fish then.

Thus was peace established; La belle Normande even took Florent under her protection. The Inspector was accepted from that moment in the market; the fish-women saying that he was far better than his predecessor. Mother Mehuden was the only one who rebelled under this new dispensation. She still retained malice against this man, of whom she spoke in the most contemptuous terms. One morning when Florent stopped at Claire's stall, she turned away petulantly, and would not speak to him. He was so surprised that he spoke of it to La belle Normande.

"Never mind," she said. "Claire is always contrary, and does this only to make me angry."

She had triumphed, and went to her stall each day more coquettish in her costume, and with her hair more elaborately dressed.

When she met La belle Lisa, she looked at her with disdain; she even laughed in her face. The certainty she felt of annoying her old friend by taking away "the cousin," put her in the best of spirits. At this time she took it into her head to dress Much with more care, in Scotch plaids, and a velvet cap, for Much had gone about in rags.

Unfortunately, it was about this same time that the affection of Much for water developed itself more strongly. The ice had broken; the weather was warmer, and he took his usual bath from the faucets, arrayed in his new garments.

His mother surprised him just as he had placed some small fish which he had stolen from his Aunt Claire, in his velvet cap, and sent them swimming down the gutter.

Florent lived eight months in the Halles. These eight months, after his seven long years of suffering, were as a peaceful slumber. His simple little office pleased him with its quiet and solitude. But after these eight months had elapsed, he became a little restless. He was filled with a vague dissatisfaction at the emptiness of his existence, and this dissatisfaction was rapidly growing into a certain nervous excitement.

Every day was like its fellow. He was surrounded by the same odors, and by the same noises. Through the hoarse cries of the auctioneers in the market, he heard the ringing of the distant bells. Sometimes he was detained in the markets until noon, arranging the endless quarrels and disputes. He saw huge baskets of cooked lobsters,

and gloved gentlemen lightly touching them. Further on were the women of the Quartier, bare-headed, bargaining for their fish. Sometimes he caught sight of a lady followed by a servant in her long white apron.

His inspection always ended at the stalls which displayed the herring and the sardines from Nantes, on their beds of green leaves. In the afternoon the markets were quiet, and he shut himself up in his office, and enjoyed the most agreeable hours of the day. The fish-women sat knitting behind their counters, waiting on an occasional customer, who came late, hoping for a better bargain.

When night came, the fish were all put away on beds of ice; then Florent was free to go home.

He carried away with him the smell of the fish in his clothing. At first he did not suffer from this; but, as the Spring came in, it became very disagreeable to him, and in time the smell from the fish-market grew absolutely insupportable. It seemed to him that he was haunted by the smell of food in his home as well as in his office; it followed him through closed doors and windows.

Sometimes, in his restlessness, he went down the wide stairs into the cellars, dimly lighted by gas, where the air, though a little close, was cool and uncontaminated by the smell which was especially obnoxious to him. He stood by the side of the great tank in which the supplies of fish were held in reserve.

He listened to the incessant soft drip of water falling from the four corners of the central urn, and this noise calmed him. He was not at home either with the people.

Their roughness galled him. The women worried him; he was only at ease with Madame François. She was so heartily glad at his having found a situation that he was quite touched. Lisa and La belle Normande made him uncomfortable with their laughs and significant looks, but Madame François was different. She laughed too, but her laugh was sympathetic. Besides, she was a courageous creature, and bore her hard life well. Florent saw her struggling through the storm just at daybreak, with the wheels of her wagon covered with mud up to the hubs, and Balthasar's very belly encrusted from the heavy roads between Nanterre and Paris.

The animal was always caressed and pitied, rubbed off with straw and polished down with an old apron.

"We have to be careful about colics," she said. "Ah! poor old Balthasar! when we came over the bridge at Neuilly, you thought you were going down into the Seine, did you not? It poured then!"

Balthasar went to the inn, but she, poor woman, sat in the rain and sold her vegetables. The sidewalk was a sea of liquid mud. The vegetables had none of the beauty that was theirs on sunny mornings, and the vendors swore at the Administration, which refused to build them a roof, on the ground that rain did not hurt vegetables.

No matter how merciless the rain might be, however, never did Florent find Madame François out of temper or discouraged. She shook herself occasionally, like a water-dog, and said she was neither sugar nor salt, and should not melt. He insisted, sometimes, on her going

into Lebigre's, where they drank some hot wine. Her friendly face enchanted him, and the smell of the woods and fields which hung about her refreshed him.

"You must come to Nanterre, my boy," she said. "You must see my kitchen-garden. Never did you behold such thyme as mine, and never did I smell anything so nasty as your Paris!"

And off she went, with the water dripping from her, at every step, leaving Florent cheered and encouraged. He worked hard, as in this way he kept within bounds the nervous energy which was his characteristic. He was also very methodical, and he shut himself up two evenings in the week to write his great work on Cayenne.

He lighted his fire, saw that the plants at the foot of his bed were sheltered from its heat, and, seating himself at his table, worked until midnight. He had pushed the prayer-book to the back of the drawer, which had become full, by degrees, of notes and slips of paper, and of all sorts of manuscript. The work on Cayenne made no rapid advance, as it was constantly interfered with by other projects. He had in his mind a plan which would revolutionize the Halles—a new way of estimating the taxes, and finally another plan, as yet a little confused in detail—a humanitarian law, by which a certain amount of the vast supply of food which poured daily into Paris, would find its way to every household.

With bowed head, he bent over his work in the soft, subdued light of his attic. Occasionally a chaffinch, which he had picked up one snowy day, in the market,

deluded by the idea that the light meant morning, would utter a few clear notes. This and his pen running over the paper were the only sounds in the room.

Unfortunately, Florent hankered after politics. They had cost him so dearly, that they naturally became most precious to him. He, under certain circumstances, would have become a teacher in some little provincial town, and been quite happy in his métier. But he had been treated like a wild beast, and he looked upon himself as consecrated by his exile to some great struggle.

His nervous restlessness was but the reaction from the long torpor of Cayenne, from the bitterness caused by his unmerited sufferings, by his oaths to avenge the injustice from which he and all humanity in him had suffered.

He began to look on the Halles as a great animal, digesting a tremendous meal. Around him were solid figures and round faces, offering a continual protest against his pallid face and emaciated form. They seemed to say that peaceable people could grow fat and be comfortable.

He with clenched hands, brooded over his wrongs, until he became more irritated at the remembrance of his exile, than he was at the time of his return to France. He would drop his pen and think. The dying fire lighted up his face, and his lamp smoked, while the bird, with his head under his wing, quietly slept. Sometimes Auguste, seeing a light under his door, would knock and ask to come in. Florent opened the door with some impatience. The young man would take a chair in front of the fire, saying little, and giving no explanation of why he had come.

All the time his eyes were fixed on the photograph of himself and Augustine. Florent finally came to the conclusion that he liked to come to this room, merely because his fiancée had once lived there.

One evening he asked, with a smile, if he had not guessed aright.

"Perhaps," answered Auguste, in surprise; the question having explained his own feelings to himself.

"I did not think of it, and if I should tell Augustine so, she would only laugh," he said.

When he talked at all, it was about the eating-house which he intended to establish with Augustine at Plassans. He seemed so secure of his future, that Florent felt a certain respect for him, as for any fellow-creature who went straight to his aim.

On such evenings Florent was more discontented than usual, and only recovered his equilibrium, when he had said to himself, over and over again:

"But this Auguste is a perfect brute!"

Each month he went to Clamart to see Monsieur Valoque. The poor man lingered along, much to the astonishment of Gavard. At each visit made by Florent, the invalid declared that he was better, and almost ready to resume work. Florent sat by the side of the bed and tried to cheer him. He laid on the table the fifty francs which he had agreed to give up, and each time Valoque insisted he would not take the money. Then they talked of other things, and the money still lay there.

When Florent went away, Madame Valoque followed

him to the door. She was pale and small, and very sad. She spoke of the frightful expense attendant on her husband's illness—the beef-tea, the Bordeaux, and the medicines; and as tears filled the poor woman's eyes, Florent begged her to accept some assistance from him without her husband's knowledge. She accepted fifty francs, but during the month she often wrote to him, calling him her saviour, filling three pages with her gratitude, and ending by asking for ten francs. Finally the whole salary went to the Valoque ménage. The husband probably knew nothing of it, and the wife was pitifully humble.

This good action was his great joy; he concealed it as if it were something to be ashamed of.

Florent's needs were small, for he had no expenses at his brother's. After a short time his life was as regular as a clock. He worked in his attic two evenings; taught little Much two others, from eight to nine; spent one evening with Lisa, and the rest of his time with Gavard and his friends at the restaurant. His duties as a teacher at the Mehudens' were not especially easy, but the old house pleased him. The lower rooms were occupied by a man who sold cooked vegetables, the sharp smell of which greeted him as soon as the door opened.

The Mehudens occupied the whole of the second story. The old mother would never consent to move, notwithstanding the entreaties of her two daughters, who wanted one of the new houses in the wide streets; but all in vain. She said she had lived there, and there she would die.

She contented herself, however, with a dark room, leaving the better chambers to Claire and La Normande.

The latter, with the authority of an elder sister, took the one overlooking the street, which was really a fine room. Claire was so displeased at this, that she refused to occupy the adjoining one, which opened on the court-yard, and took as her own, a sort of garret, on the other side of the stairs. Herein, when she was displeased, she locked herself, and was deaf to all sounds from without.

When Florent presented himself, the Mehudens had just finished dinner. Much jumped into his arms, and when the shining oil-cloth was wiped down, the lessons began on a corner of the table. La belle Normande greeted him warmly; she knitted or mended under the light of the same lamp, and often dropped her needle to listen to the lesson.

She soon had a great esteem for this man who was so well informed, and was at the same time endowed with such angelic patience. She did not think him in the least ugly now.

"Do, please, mamma, push your chair farther back," said the child, angrily. "Just see this blot!"

By degrees she insinuated a few words against La belle Lisa. She declared that she concealed her age—that she laced so tightly she could not breathe, and that the reason she always came down in the morning without a hair out of place, was because she was so hideous in dishabille, and then she raised her arms above her head, to show that she wore no corsets; her figure was superb, and every undulation was

to be seen under her loose camisole. The lesson was interrupted. Much was quite interested in seeing his mother lift her arms in this way. Florent laughed, and thought women were strange creatures. The rivalry of Lisa and La belle Normande amused him.

Much in the meantime finished his copy. Florent set others on slips of paper. He particularly affected the words, "Tyrannical, anti-Constitutional, Revolutionary," and he made the child copy phrases like these:

"The day of justice will come."

"When the hour strikes, the guilty will fall."

He did this mechanically, merely setting down the ideas which were in his brain. He forgot Much, La belle Normande and all his surroundings.

Much copied everything, filling long pages with "unconstitutional" and "tyrannically."

All this time Mother Mehuden was wandering around the table, grumbling. She was by no means kindly disposed toward Florent. She said it was absolute folly to set the child at work at this hour, when children ought to be asleep in their beds.

She would certainly have shown "the lank fellow" to the door, if her daughter had not fiercely declared, that she would leave the house, if she could not receive in it such friends as she chose. Nevertheless, the dispute recommenced each evening.

"I tell you," said the old woman, "that he has a treacherous eye; and then I never trust thin men; he is as flat as a board; he has no insides, I do really believe."

She talked in this way because she saw how things were going. She spoke with admiration of Monsieur Lebigre, who at this time was very gallant toward La belle Normande. He not only smelt a good dowry, but he thought of her beauty which would be such an addition to his counter.

But La Normande shrugged her shoulders and turned away. When her mother persisted, she said, angrily:

"Let me alone, will you? I shall do as I please!"

And going out of the room, she slammed the door. She abused the ascendency she had acquired in the house, but her mother distrusted her to that point, that when she heard a noise in the night, she crept to her daughter's door to ascertain if Florent were not there.

But Florent had a bitterer enemy even, than she in the house. As soon as he entered the room, Claire rose without a word, took a candle and went to her own attic, and they heard her lock her door, with a snap.

One night, her sister asked the Inspector to dinner, and Claire eat hers in the passage-way. She sometimes was not seen for a week, and when she came out, her eyes were restless and suspicious.

As Florent one evening was going away, he passed Claire's door, which was wide open. He saw her turn very red as he glanced at her.

This hostile attitude on her part saddened him, and only the timidity he always felt toward women, prevented him from asking an explanation. He hesitated, but catching a glimpse of Mademoiselle Saget's pale face looking down from the upper landing, he went on.

He had not gone ten steps when he heard Claire's door violently closed. From that time Mademoiselle Saget declared that Madame Quenu's cousin had led both the Mehuden women astray.

Florent rarely thought of them, except when they were before his eyes. His manner toward women was that of a man who has never had any success with them. He expended too much of his virility in dreaming. He liked La belle Normande in a friendly sort of way. She was good-hearted, even if she did allow her temper to run away with her sometimes. But when she drew her chair close to him, and looked over the book he held, he was uncomfortable. About her hair and skirts clung always a smell of the sea; her magnificent figure and clear-cut features, gave her the air of an antique statue which had been lying at the bottom of the sea and brought to the surface by some fisherman's net.

Florent did not admire her especially. She was too large, too powerfully built to please him, in spite of Mademoiselle Saget's statement that he was her lover. The old maid had quarrelled with La Normande about a fish she had purchased, and immediately became very friendly toward La belle Lisa, and hoped in that way to make the acquaintance of Florent, who, however, contrived to escape her clutches. The cousin excited her curiosity to the most extraordinary degree. Since he frequented the Mehudens, she spent most of her time hanging over the railing of the staircase.

She knew that La belle Lisa was by no means pleased

to see Florent go to "these women," and therefore went regularly to the eating-house to tell her all that was going on. She put her hands on the counter as she talked. She never bought anything, but contented herself with saying, over and over again:

"He was there yesterday, and La Normande called him 'dear' out in the corridor."

The day after, she chose to believe that she had seen Florent leave Claire's room. She rushed into Lisa's presence, saying that it was a disgrace.

"I saw it with my own eyes," she declared. "He just goes from one to the other, and there is the old mother sleeping in her room between the daughters. I think it is simply scandalous."

Lisa shrugged her shoulders. She said little, encouraging the old maid's gossip only by her silence. When the allusions became broader, she frowned and said, under her breath:

"No, this will never do!"

Mademoiselle Saget answered that all women were not as respectable as herself. She ought to have found that out by this time. She was too indulgent to the cousin. A man of his age ought not to run after every petticoat. Was he married?

But Lisa would never say a word about "the cousin," and when Mademoiselle Saget had gone, immediately called to Augustine to bring a cloth to rub off the spots left by the fingers of the little old woman on the shining marble.

"It is disgusting!" she muttered.

The rivalry of La belle Lisa and La belle Normande became daily more aggressive—the latter being quite sure that she had stolen Lisa's lover. Each woman evinced her hostility according to her temperament; one, tranquil and contemptuous, with the air of a woman who draws her skirts closely around her, to keep them from contamination—the other insolent, loud and gay, with the manner of a successful duellist who is eager for a fray. Their glances crossed each other like swords, when La Normande passed the eating-shop and Lisa stood at the door.

When Lisa went to the fish-market, she turned up her nose when she passed her rival's stall, and bought at the next, a turbot or a salmon.

To hear the rivals talk of each other, one would believe that they sold spoiled fish and tainted meat.

They could see each other, too, from their respective places of business.

"The great cow is up!" cried La belle Normande. "She is pulling her corset-lace as tight as if it were at the end of one of her big sausages."

At the same moment, on the other side of the street, Lisa was saying to her assistant:

"Do you see that poor creature opposite? She is losing all her good looks with the life she leads. Do you see her ear-rings? It is a great pity for a girl like that to wear such expensive ones."

"It is a great pity for the one who has to pay for them," answered Augustine, complacently.

But in the afternoon the contest waged hotter. La belle Normande embroidered with the most delicate of needles. This exasperated Lisa, who said:

"She had best darn her boy's stockings with those red hands!"

Lisa was knitting as usual.

"It is always the same stocking, too," remarked the other. "She eats so much that she falls asleep over her work!"

The two women forbade their children to speak to each other. Pauline and Much before this, had been excellent friends—the little girl with her fresh, crisp skirts, and the bare-legged boy paddling in the gutter. One day, when Much came for Pauline as usual, Lisa dismissed him as if he had been a beggar.

"He cannot play with my child," she said. "I could never have an easy moment; he has such examples before him."

The child was only seven.

Mademoiselle Saget nodded her head sagaciously.

"You are right; he is thoroughly depraved. He was found in the cellar, the other day, with one of the neighbors' little girls."

La belle Normande, when Much ran to her weeping, to tell her of his disappointment, was perfectly furious. She would have liked to break every pane of glass in Lisa's windows, but contented herself with whipping Much.

"If you ever go there again," she raged, "you will have an account to settle with me!"

The real victim of these two women was Florent, for they would never have quarrelled but for him—it was he who had set them all by the ears, for until his arrival they had lived in dull peace.

La belle Lisa preserved the attitude toward her brother-in-law of a judge. She showed him clearly that she utterly disapproved of his conduct, but did her best not to show the jealousy she felt. Honest woman as she was, and thorough as was her disdain of Florent, she never saw him leave the house to go to la Rue Pirouette without a pang.

The dinners at the Quenus' were less cheerful. The excessive neatness of the dining-room became almost rigid. Florent hardly dared eat, lest he should let a few crumbs fall on the floor.

Lisa said with a smile one day:

"It seems to me that you grow thinner and thinner."

In her tone there was something of the distrust, which Mother Mehuden openly acknowledged feeling toward thin people, and Quenu hazarded more than one allusion to the dissipated life his brother was believed to lead.

Lisa, however, never made the smallest allusion to La belle Normande; and one night, when her name dropped from Quenu's unwary lips, she became so icy that he never repeated the offence.

Lisa never spoke of Florent to her husband. She thought it unwise to make the smallest difference between the brothers, unless absolutely necessary. At this time she was very tolerant, and avoided every allusion which

could remind the Inspector, that he ate and drank with her without paying for the privilege; but one day she said to Quenu:

"We are never alone now. If you wish to speak to me, you must wait until we go to bed."

And one evening, as she was sewing, she said to her husband:

"Why does not your brother buy himself some underwear? I have been obliged to give him three old shirts of yours."

"He never knows what he does with his money," answered Quenu.

"And it is none of our business," replied his wife.

Only once did she lose her repose of manner. La Normande had presented Florent with a fine salmon. He did not know how to refuse, nor what to do with it, and finally carried it home to Lisa.

"Suppose you make a pâté of it," he said, ingenuously.

She looked at him with whitened lips. Then, in a voice that she strove to render firm, she answered:

"Do you think we are in need of food? Thank Heaven, we have enough to eat yet. Take it away."

"Will you not cook it for me?" asked Florent, amazed at her anger.

Her anger burst forth.

"Do you think this house is a country inn? Tell the persons who gave it to you to cook it. It shall not be done in my kettles or pans. Take it away, I tell you."

He carried it to Monsieur Lebigre. Rose was told to

make a pâté of it, and this pâté was eaten the same evening, Monsieur Gavard adding some oysters to the feast. By degrees Florent gradually fell into the way of spending more time at the Cabaret. Sometimes, when he had established himself for a quiet evening's work in his attic, the absolute quiet of the room grated upon him, and he dropped everything, and went off to listen to the sarcastic denunciations of Charvet, and to the bitter axioms of Logre.

One evening Logre, having been more violent than usual, brought his fist down on the table furiously, and declared that if the men of to-day were worth anything, they would pull down the government, and he added that the day was not far off when this would be done, and that they had best hold themselves in readiness.

Heads were then drawn closely together, voices were lowered, and Gavard from that day looked upon himself as belonging to a secret society—a most dangerous organization.

Discussions were renewed night after night for months, then followed questions of organizations,—questions of ends and means—questions of strategy and future government.

As soon as Rose had served the party, Clémence included, the doors were closed, and the séance was opened.

Charvet and Florent were the two, to whom the others naturally listened. Gavard could not hold his tongue, however, and little by little he told the story of Cayenne, and promoted Florent to the distinction of a martyr, and

one night, when some one said something against his friend, who was absent, he exclaimed:

"Do not attack Florent. He has been to Cayenne."

But Charvet was not abashed, even by this distinction, and he replied:

"Cayenne! Cayenne indeed! It is not such a bad place after all."

He then tried to prove that exile was nothing; that it was far worse to remain in a country oppressed by triumphant Despotism. He insisted, that only simpletons were arrested on the Second of December, and seemed much out of temper, however, that he had not arrived at that distinction himself.

Florent called himself a Socialist, and was supported by Alexandre and Lacaille. As to Gavard, having been reproached for his fortune, he more than once announced himself to be a Communist.

"The fact is," said Charvet, in his decisive tone, "the trunk is rotten, and it should be cut down!"

"Yes," answered Logre, standing up to make his assent more imposing.

"Yes, you are right," he repeated, pompously.

Robine approved with a silent nod, which became more frequent the more Revolutionary the propositions became. His eyes gleamed at the word guillotine; he shut them partially, and seemed to be looking at the thing itself, and then he rubbed his chin with a gentle purr of satisfaction.

"I think," said Florent, in a voice which had a tone of sadness—"I think that the tree should be preserved to

graft upon it a new life. It is time now to think of the workman. Our movement should be a social one, and I defy you to restrain the people from advancing their claims. They will have their share now: they are weary of standing back!"

These words filled Alexandre with wild enthusiasm.

"Yes," he cried, "that is true!"

"All revolutions," said Lacaille, "have been for the middle-classes. We must have our turn!"

"But," exclaimed Charvet, "do you expect me to fight for the workmen if they refuse to fight for me? But after all, that is not the question. France cannot be accustomed to the exercise of Liberty, without ten years of Revolutionary dictatorship."

"Particularly," said Clémence, in a low, distinct tone, "as the workman is not mature, and needs guidance."

She spoke but rarely. This strange, grave, quiet woman listened like any man, to these political discussions. She sat leaning against the wall, looking from one to the other of the speakers, with a nod of assent or a frown of disapproval, which proved that she fully understood what was said, and that she had, moreover, decided opinions on the most complicated subjects. Sometimes she rolled a cigarette and smoked it slowly and contemplatively. She had the air of sitting in judgment, and looked as if she had prizes to distribute at the end. She evidently thought it due to her position as a woman, to reserve her opinion, and not mingle in the discussions. Sometimes, however, in the heat of them, she uttered a

word or two: and "Struck the nail on the head," to use Gavard's expression; or put the climax to something which Charvet had said. The truth was, that she thought herself far cleverer than any of these men, with the exception of Robine, whom she respected for his silence.

Florent, like the other men, paid very little attention to Clémence, whom, in fact, they regarded as one of themselves. They shook her hand as if they would loosen her arm from its socket.

One evening Florent heard her and Charvet talking over her accounts. Charvet asked her to lend him ten francs, but she said no; that they must first know just how they stood. They lived together on the basis of freedom, both in love and money. Each paid his expenses strictly, and thus were slaves to no man. The rent, food, washing and amusements were all divided, and this evening Clémence proved to Charvet that he already owed her five francs. She then gave him the ten for which he asked, saying:

"Remember you now owe me fifteen! You must pay me when you get your money for little Léhudier's lessons."

When Rose was summoned to receive the money due from the little circle, Clémence was laughed at, because she ordered a glass of "grog." Charvet said she did it to humiliate him because he earned less than she. Although he laughed, he felt this fact keenly, and inwardly protested against it, in spite of his theory of the equality of the sexes.

If these discussions amounted to little, they at least exercised the lungs of these gentlemen. Sometimes they talked so loudly that Rose, serving some blouse at the counter, would cast an uneasy glance toward the closed door.

"They are quarrelling in there!" said the blouse, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand.

"No danger," answered Monsieur Lebigre, quietly. "It is only gentlemen talking."

Lebigre, who was strict enough with his other customers, let these talk and shout as much as they pleased, without any interference from him. He sat for hours on his soft-cushioned chair, sleepily watching Rose uncork her bottles and wipe her glasses. But no matter how sleepy he was, he always rose when the discussions in the private room became at all loud, and placed himself where he could hear what was said, and sometimes even, he after a light tap on the door, knocked and went in, and Gavard himself said that Lebigre could be relied on if troubles came.

But one morning, at market, when Florent interfered between Rose and a fish-woman in a tremendous quarrel that took place apropos of some herring, he heard the latter call Rose "the spy's mistress," and "the dirty rag of the Préfecture."

When peace was established, he went about quietly and informed himself as far as he was able in regard to Lebigre.

One said that he had been on the police force; another that he was a usurer, and lent to the market-people at the most fearful rate of interest.

Florent was much disturbed, and that same evening he in a low voice told his friends what he had heard.

His discourse was received with derision.

"Poor Florent!" said Charvet, maliciously, "because he has been at Cayenne, he always thinks the police are at his heels."

Gavard gave his word of honor that Lebigre was honest and honorable. But Logre was very angry; he twisted himself on his chair until it cracked, and said that it was a little too much, to hear these constant suggestions of the police. For his part he would rather stay at home, and think no more of politics. Had he not been transported twice?

He looked so ferocious, that the others nodded an assent; but Lacaille, when he heard the word usurer, turned away his head.

In fact, the plot made but little progress. At the beginning of the Summer, Florent had been somewhat distrustful, but had now begun to believe in the possibility of some Revolutionary movement. He occupied himself with the idea quite seriously, taking notes and drawing up plans. He even induced his brother to accompany him to the Cabaret one evening, with the feeling that he was still his pupil, and should be now launched in politics. Quenu liked this new experience; he liked the noise; he liked the novelty of the presence of a woman in such a place.

La belle Lisa noticed his haste to leave home in the evening. She said nothing; but when he and Florent

went away, she stood at her door and saw them enter the Cabaret with stormy eyes and compressed lips.

Mademoiselle Saget one evening recognized Quenu's shadow on the ground-glass windows of the private room which looked out on la Rue Pirouette. She had found an excellent post of observation, where she soon learned to know every shadow. Sometimes she felt as if she might find out something more tangible if she were on the spot. So she took her cordial bottle on the pretence that she must "take something" the first thing in the morning.

She made Rose wash her bottle in order to spend more time at the counter; but at last she could find no further excuse for delay, and she reluctantly turned to leave, when she heard Quenu say in a childish tone:

"It is high time that these Deputies and Ministers should be put down!"

Before eight o'clock the next morning Mademoiselle Saget was at Lisa's. She found La Sarriette and Madame Lecœur there, buying hot sausages for their breakfast. As the little old maid had drawn them into her quarrel with La belle Normande, they naturally became quite intimate with Lisa. They declared that the fish-woman was abominable, and that Florent was getting tired of managing the two, and was handing one of them over to his friend Gavard; the four went often to supper at Baratte's.

On the especial morning of which we write, the old maid had prepared a blow for La belle Lisa.

"I saw Monsieur Quenu," she said, in her sweetest voice. "They have a good time, those gentlemen, in that private room, where they make so much noise."

Lisa did not choose to look as if she heard, but, in reality, not a word escaped her. Mademoiselle Saget went on:

"They had a woman with them. Oh! not Monsieur Quenu. I don't say it was he, for I don't know—"

"It was Clémence," interrupted La Sarriette. "She puts on such airs just because she was educated at a boarding-school. She lives with a ragged Professor. I have seen them together many a time."

"I know," said the old maid, who had known all the time and merely wished to disturb Lisa, who, however, looked as placid as usual; she seemed interested in something that was going on in the market.

Then the other tried again, and, addressing Madame Lecœur, she said:

"If I were you, I would advise my brother-in-law to be prudent. They say the most awful things in that room. Men really seem to have no sense with their politics. If they should be heard, things might go hard with them."

"Gavard does as he chooses," sighed Madame Lecœur; "but this is the drop too much. Anxiety will soon use me up entirely."

"Oh!" answered Mademoiselle Saget, "it will do no harm, so long as only a safe person, like myself, hears them. But last night when Monsieur Quenu said—"

She stopped. Lisa had certainly started.

"Monsieur Quenu said that all the Ministers and Deputies ought to be shot!"

Lisa turned around: she was very pale.

"Did Quenu say that?" she asked.

"Yes, and much more that I cannot remember. But there is no harm done, for, as I say, it was only I, who heard him, and you know that I am as safe as possible. I know, too, how much harm such words might do a man. It is between ourselves entirely."

Lisa was herself again. She was too proud to allow these people to see that there was the smallest cloud between herself and her husband. She smiled faintly and said:

"It is all nonsense, my dear woman."

When the three women were on the sidewalk, they agreed that Lisa looked extremely discomfited, and they thought that there would be trouble soon among these people. Madame Lecœur asked what was done with people who were arrested for political reasons. The old maid said she had no idea, she only knew that they were never seen again.

La Sarriette whereupon jauntily remarked that perhaps they were thrown into the Seine.

That day at breakfast and dinner Lisa made no remarks, nor when in the evening her husband went away with Florent.

That night the discussion was so interesting that it was prolonged until after midnight.

Quenu went home with rather an uneasy conscience. He opened the three or four doors of his house as softly as possible, and crossed the salon on tiptoe. On entering his bed-room he was annoyed to see that Lisa had left a

candle burning. As he took off his boots the clock struck half-past one, with a clear, ringing sound, which was so loud that he started, and turned a glance of reproach upon the shining Guttenberg. He could only see Lisa's back. She lay with her head buried in her pillows, but he knew she was not asleep—that her eyes were wide open, and fixed on the wall. Her large shoulders were eloquent with restrained anger. Quenu, considerably disconcerted by the silent reproach of her attitude, blew out the candle, and slipped into bed, lying on its very edge. Finally he fell asleep, not daring to say good-night.

The next day he slept late. When he awoke, he lay for a few minutes looking at Lisa, who was seated before her Secretary, putting her papers in order. He summoned all his courage, and said from over the eider-down coverings:

"Why did not you wake me before? What are you doing?"

"Putting my drawers in order," she answered.

He felt the weight lifted from his shoulders. But she added:

"You can't tell what may happen. If the police should come—"

"The police, did you say?"

"Yes, certainly. Are you occupied with politics now?"

He raised himself, considerably startled by this unexpected attack.

"I do not care a sou for politics," he said. "The police won't come here, I fancy, for I shall not compromise myself—"

"No, indeed," answered Lisa, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You merely wish to shoot everybody!"

"I! I!"

"Yes, and you shout this out at a second-rate Cabaret. Mademoiselle Saget heard you say it. All the whole Quartier know by this time that you are a 'Red.'"

He pulled the sheets over his head. He was not more than half awake. He shivered as if he already heard the gendarmes at the door of his room. He looked at her with her hair dressed as usual; her well-fitting gown was the one she always wore, and vaguely wondered at finding her so correct under these dramatic circumstances.

"You know," she continued, "that I leave you absolutely free." She went on sorting her papers. "I have no desire to rule; you are the master. You can ruin us. It is my duty to look out for Pauline."

He protested, but she silenced him with a gesture.

"I do not wish to quarrel," she said. "Had you asked my advice—"

She rose and went from the bed to the window, and back again to her desk, from which she brushed a few grains of dust.

"For my part, I am grateful to the Government. Our business is prosperous, and I eat my dinner quietly and sleep undisturbed by cannon. How was it in '48? Uncle Gradelle showed us on his books how he lost over six thousand francs at that time. Now that we have the Empire, all is prosperous. What more do you want? How will you be any better off, when you have shot everybody?"

She stood with her arms folded, looking at Quenu, who disappeared entirely. He put out his head at last and essayed an explanation, but became hopelessly involved in the political and social systems of Charvet and Florent. He spoke of the future of the Democracy, of the regeneration of Society, in such confused terms, that Lisa shrugged her shoulders in despair. He finally attacked the Empire. It was the reign of utter profligacy, of theft by mailed hands.

"You see," he said, repeating a phrase he had caught from Logre, "we are at the mercy of a band of adventurers who are devastating France. We must have done with them!"

"Very well; and what then? You are not obliged to assassinate, pillage, or steal, and what do we care what other people do?"

She was quite magnificent, as she walked up and down the room in stately fashion.

"If the Government does vile things," she continued, "I do not wish to know it. Gavard says that the Emperor is a bad man, and that he is mixed up in some scandalous stories. This may be true—probably is—but that need not prevent your voting for him, for he does not ask you to lend him money, and you have only to let the Government understand, that you are satisfied in the prosperity of your business."

"Listen to me," and she seated herself on the edge of the bed.

"Do you want your shop pillaged? Do you want your

cellar emptied, and your money taken? Do you think that if these men, at Monsieur Lebigre's, triumph, that you will be as comfortable as you are now? No, indeed. Then why do you talk so lightly of upsetting a Government which has given you this protection? You have a wife and a daughter. Your first duty is to them. You have no right to risk their happiness. There are plenty of people without a roof over their heads, who can risk their lives as much as they please, but as for you, my dear, simple husband, you had best make yourself comfortable, eat well, sleep well, and keep an easy conscience. France does not need you."

She laughed, and Quenu was entirely convinced that she was right, and that she was a very pretty woman. He looked around the room, and his eyes fell on their portraits, which had quite an air of distinction, he thought. The chamber, too, was quite imposing. The squares of guipure gave an air of respectability to the chairs; the carpets and curtains had a most comfortable aspect, and he seemed to himself, to have risked the loss of all these at Monsieur Lebigre's.

"Now," said his wife, "you must promise to meddle no more with politics. Sustain the Government to the extent of your ability, and when you are old you will live in peace on your income."

Quenu again assented.

"It is Gavard," he murmured.

The smile faded from her face.

"No; it is not Gavard. I know who it is. He

should be surer of his own safety before he compromises others."

"Do you mean Florent?" asked Quenu, timidly.

She did not reply at once, but turned away to the Secretary. Then she said, in quick, decided tones:

"Yes; I mean Florent. You know I am very patient. On no consideration would I come between you and your brother. The ties of blood are sacred. But the truth is, that ever since your brother came, things have gone from bad to worse. No; I will not say any more."

There was a long silence, and as Quenu looked in a dazed sort of a way at the ceiling, she continued, with more violence:

"He seems to have no idea either, of the sacrifices we make for him. He has Augustine's chamber, and the poor girl has to sleep in a closet, without a breath of air. We feed him and supply all his needs, and he accepts everything as a matter of course. He makes money, but we see none of it."

"You know we have his inheritance in our business," Quenu timidly observed.

Lisa looked as if she were stunned. Her anger fell.

"You are right," she said, slowly; "we have his inheritance, and the account is in that drawer. He would not have it, as you remember, which proves the truth of my words, that he is a fellow without any sense. If he had been in the least practical, he would have done something with that money. I did not want it. I spoke to him several times, but he would not hear me. I wish you would compel him to take it."

Quenu uttered a groan. Lisa dropped that point

"No; he is not like any person I ever saw before," she continued. "I say this merely because we are talking about him. I should not trouble myself about what he did or where he went, were it not that the whole Quartier are talking about him. But I tell you positively that if he is going to meddle with politics again, and proposes to involve you, that I shall get rid of him at once. I warn you, and I hope you understand!"

Florent was condemned. She made a strong effort to control herself, and not allow her husband to suspect the flood of bitterness which filled her soul.

She went on.

"He worries me," she said; "he frightens me. Besides, he smells of fish, and I can't eat a mouthful when he is at the table. He eats, though; but why he does not grow fat passes my comprehension!"

She went to the window as she spoke, and caught a glimpse of her brother-in-law just entering the market, and the look with which she followed him, was that of a combatant—of a woman who is resolved to triumph.

When she turned, Quenu had risen. He was pale and shivering, not from cold, but with grief at the lack of harmony between his wife and his brother. But Lisa smiled, and handed him his slippers, which courtesy touched him greatly.

## CHAPTER IV.

### "CHICKWEED FOR THE LITTLE BIRDS."

MARJOLIN was found in the Marché des Innocents, among a pile of cabbages. No one ever knew what wretched hands had put him there; he was about three years old when he was found—fat and happy, but so dull or backward that he did not speak one word.

When a woman, turning over the cabbages, suddenly beheld him under a huge white cabbage, she uttered a little shriek, and he stretched out his arms to her. The whole day long the market talked of him. He laughed all day, and ate whatever was given him. The woman who first saw him kept him a month. She then passed him on to another, and then to another. When any one said to him "Where is your mother?" he made a droll little gesture, which took in the whole market-women. He was the child of the Halles, living first with one of the women, and then with another; dressed no one precisely knew how, but always having a few sous in his pocket. A beautiful girl who sold plants called him Marjolin, no one knew why, but the name was adopted.

Marjolin was four when Mother Chantemesse found, in her turn, a little girl on the sidewalk, outside of the market. The child could not have been more than two, but she chattered like a magpie, in her childish dialect.

The woman thought she called herself Cadine, and said that her mother had told her to wait for her, but the little girl was quite ready to go with Mother Chantemesse, and seemed delighted with the crowd and all the pretty vegetables. Mother Chantemesse was a goodish sort of woman, about sixty, who adored children, and had lost three of her own, and she adopted Cadine.

One evening, as the old woman was walking through the market, leading Cadine by the right hand, Marjolin came up and took the child's left hand, without the smallest ceremony.

"Well! well!" said the old woman. "You are too late; your place is taken."

But when the little fellow smiled in her face, it was too much for her, and she said to him:

"Come on, one may as well have two as one, I suppose."

And she walked home, leading the two children, whom she put to bed in an old hand-cart without wheels, which if it was a little hard, was clean. Thus did the two little imps grow up together and became inseparable. Mother Chantemesse heard them talking together softly in the night. Cadine, in her baby voice, would tell the most wonderful stories, to which Marjolin would listen in mute amazement.

She invented stories, as she grew older, which filled him with terror. She was once heard to say that the night before she had seen a tall man, all in white, standing at the foot of their bed looking at them, and when Marjolin piteously begged for further details, she laughed delightedly, and called him "a great simpleton."

For a long time their bed was their play-room. Cadine took her dolls there, and there their white teeth crunched stolen turnips. Each morning their adopted mother was astonished to find leaves and stones, apple-cores, and bundles of paper, rolled up to imitate dolls. On rainy days, or very cold days, they remained in bed half the day, and slept as much as they could.

This room in la Rue de la Lingerie was a large attic, lighted by one window only. The children played hide-and-seek there, in the tall wardrobe and under the colossal bed. There were two or three tables, under which they could crawl. The house had a succession of gutters, into which the children threw stones with such success, that they broke two windows, and Mother Chantemesse was requested to leave.

Cadine and Marjolin spent much of their time in the streets, which they fearlessly threaded. When it rained, they walked gravely, side by side, under an umbrella, which was all in slits, having been used for twenty years to shelter a vegetable-stand. They planted it in a corner of the market, and called it their house.

On sunny, warm days they bathed their feet in the gutter, made little dams across it with stones, hid among the vegetables, and stayed there all night.

Sometimes they would be caught, by the delighted chuckle which came from a mountain of lettuces, and when they were rooted out, they looked like scared birds discovered amid the bushes. Cadine could not live without Marjolin, and Marjolin wept when he lost Cadine. When

they became separated they always looked for each other first among the cabbages, which they seemed to prefer to all other vegetables.

Marjolin was eight and Cadine six, when Mother Chantemesse first made them feel ashamed of their idleness. She promised them each a sou per day, if they would help her pare her vegetables.

This was the specialty of Mother Chantemesse. On her table were piled little heaps of potatoes, turnips and carrots, scraped and peeled, ready to pop into the pot of some hurried housewife. She also had soup-herbs tied up, and bundles, ready for the pot au feu—four leeks, three carrots, one parsnip, two turnips, and some celery-tops.

Then, too, there were vegetables, cut fine, lying on paper, ready for a "Julienne."

Cadine was much more skilful than Marjolin, although younger. Her potato-parings were so thin, that one could see the light through them, and she tied up her herbs in so graceful a fashion, that they looked like bouquets, and made the small piles look like large ones, so skilfully did she arrange them.

People, as they passed, stopped at the clear, childish voice, which saluted them:

"Buy of me, Madame, buy of me; only two sous."

She had her own customers soon. Her little piles had quite a reputation, and Mother Chantemesse, seated between the children, laughed silently at seeing them so intent on their work. She paid them each their sou every night, but they soon grew weary of their undertaking,

and determined to enlarge their operations and find more lucrative employment.

Marjolin remained a child a long time, much to Cadine's annoyance, who called him a cabbage-head; there was some truth in what she said, for he had no faculty for making money, while she was very clever. When she was eight years old, she was employed by one of the women who sold lemons and oranges near the market, to run after people with them in her hands. She received two sous for every dozen she sold, and often made six or eight sous. The next year she sold caps, when her profits were larger. The difficulty here was, that not being allowed to sell them openly, as such commerce is forbidden, she was obliged to evade the police. She saw them a square off, the caps went under her petticoats, and when they reached her she was eating an apple with the most innocent air.

After this she sold cakes, galettes and cherry tarts, biscuits de maïs, thick and yellow—but Marjolin eat too much of her stock. At eleven she realized a great idea that had tormented her for some time. She had saved four francs, and she bought a little basket and began to sell chickweed.

This was a great event. She rose early and bought her chickweed and her branches of millet, and then she went as far as the Luxembourg, Marjolin with her; but she would not let him carry the basket. He was only good to cry her wares she said, and he shouted, until he was hoarse:

"Chickweed! chickweed for the little birds!"

And then she would take up the cry, and in a strange, musical phrase would call:

"Chickweed! chickweed for the little birds!"

At this time Marjolin wore a huge red vest, which had belonged to the defunct Father Chantemesse, who had driven a fiacre. Cadine's dress was a blue and white check cut from a tartan once worn by Mother Chantemesse. All the canary birds in the Quartier Latin knew them, and would answer to their cry by fluttering wings and an eager chirp. Cadine sold water-cresses also. "Two sous for a basket—only two sous."

The central Halles were now being built, and the little girl was carried away by the long alley of flowers which cross the fruit-market. There she saw two thick hedges of roses, and drank in the perfume with exquisite delight. She held her curly head under Marjolin's nose, and he vowed she should never use any more pomade. She finally managed so cleverly, that she obtained a position at one of the flower-stands, and lived from morning until night among roses and lilacs, wall-flowers, and lilies of the valley.

Marjolin, to tease her, would catch the hem of her dress and smell of it.

"To be sure," he would say, "lilies of the valley." Then he would snuff at her shoulders. "Wall-flowers!" he added, sententiously. He would hold her hands up high—smell of them. "Lilies, my dear, and your lips are roses."

Cadine laughed, called him a goose, and told him to let her be. But in truth she was a living bouquet.

The girl rose at four to help her mistress at her work. Each morning there were huge baskets of flowers brought in; packages of moss, periwinkle and ferns. On fête days their labors began at two o'clock, when more than one hundred thousand francs worth of cut flowers were sold in the market. On such days, only Cadine's pretty, curly head was to be seen among her pansies, mignonettes and Marguerites; she was lost among the flowers. In a very short time she had acquired not only skill, but exhibited great originality. Her bouquets did not please everybody by any means. They were even disagreeable to some persons. Reds predominated, combined with yellows and blues, in a barbaric sort of way. On those mornings when the girl had teased Marjolin, until he was ready to weep, her bouquets were more than ever fiery in color. Other days, when she was moved by some joy or some sorrow, her bouquets were soft and tender. They were roses then, or white carnations; tawny gladioli, like patches of flame among feathery verdure; a tapestry of Smyrna patiently imitated, flower by flower; or fans gracefully spread, and soft as lace; dreams of loveliness to place in the hands of a graceful woman, or a pure young girl. All the strange fancies were those of a child in whom the woman was just awakening.

Cadine respected only two things: lilacs, a bunch of which—six or eight sprays—costs in winter from fifteen to twenty francs; and camelias, which are dearer still, and which came from the florist's, in boxes of a dozen each, on a bed of moss, covered with cotton wool. She took

them up as she would have handled jewels—with the most delicate care, hardly venturing to breathe lest she should tarnish their exquisite beauty, and with infinite precautions put a fine wire through their short stems.

She spoke of them with great deference, telling Marjolin that a white camelia, without a brown or rusty stain, was a very rare thing.

One morning, when she was trying to make him admire one, he said:

"Oh, yes, it is pretty. But not half as pretty as the skin under your chin. It is no whiter, and not half as smooth."

He touched her with the tips of his fingers, and then added:

"Everything about you to-day smells of orange blossoms."

Cadine was not very amiable, nor a very submissive little servant, and consequently established herself on her own account as soon as she could, which of course was at first only on a very small scale. She sold boutonnières of violets for a sou, which were stuck in a flat basket. She spent her days in the Halles. This was her great delight, and she arranged her violets as she walked, with wonderful dexterity. She counted six or eight flowers, according to the season, added a leaf or two, and wound around them a damp thread, which she bit off with her sharp white teeth. Her basket was always full, no matter how many she sold, so quick was she in making them.

No matter how rudely she was jostled in the crowded streets, her rapid fingers moved, while her eyes were occupied with the shop windows.

Sometimes she sat down for a while in a doorway, and gave to the very gutter, wherein the dirty water ran, a look of spring. Her boutonnières indicated her mood; some were fierce and bristling, others sweet and tender. Wherever she went, she left behind her an odor of the country, and Marjolin told her she was herself one big violet.

The girl made no further changes; she adhered to the flower business. But as the two children grew up, she occasionally left her osier basket at home, and went off with Marjolin exploring the Halles and its cellars. They knew its every corner and dim recess, and were thoroughly at home with the sleeping giant.

Cadine and Marjolin had outgrown the old handcart in the attic of Mother Chantemesse. The old woman had sent the boy to a neighbor's to sleep, but the children were unhappy at the separation, and liked to curl up together behind the fruit-stalls in the market, and as they grew older they often slept in the cellar, and among the baskets of feathers enjoying the sense of companionship in the most utter innocence.

But later, they lived like young and happy animals. Cadine, at sixteen, was a thorough Bohémienne, selfish, sensual and greedy. Marjolin, at eighteen, was dull of intellect, but good-natured, if a little blasé.

Cadine laughed impudently in the face of Mother Chantemesse when the old woman asked her where she had spent the night.

When the girl was not with Marjolin, he slept anywhere

among the old boxes, but he never left the Halles. It was there they spent their lives. But their great delight, was in the especial market devoted to butter, eggs and cheeses, where every morning piles of empty baskets were found. They selected an enormous one and called it their house. There they lay unsuspected by any one, and shook with laughter, when people stopped near them to talk, without suspecting their presence. Cadine, in cherry-time, armed herself with any amount of stones, which she threw at the noses of all the old women who passed, which was all the better fun for them, as the poor old things could not divine whence came the hailstorm.

They amused themselves by following the track of the subterranean railway—the deserted avenues with its streaks of daylight coming through the gratings, the dark corners lighted by gas. The whole place seemed to belong to them. Occasionally on moonlight nights, they climbed upon the roofs by the narrow staircase at each angle, and found a wide field of zinc spread before them. But they did not stop here; they went still higher, until only the sky was above them. At this height the air was very pure. The wind swept away all the bad odors from the market, and at daybreak they sat on the edge of the roof, by the gutters, with the sparrows.

Cadine laughed aloud, with a sound like the cooing of a dove. Marjolin, when they came down, said they had been in the country.

It was at the tripe-market that they first made the acquaintance of Claude Lantier. They went there every

day. They liked to watch the carts drive up. They looked at the lambs' feet which were piled up like dirty paving-stones—the huge red tongues and bullocks' hearts. They shivered as they saw the bloody heads, and thought of a guillotine; but fascinated, followed them to the cellar, and saw them broken one by one by the butchers with a mallet, and the brains taken out.

Toward evening, between four and five, Cadine and Marjolin were sure of meeting Claude, who was in an ecstasy at the beauty of coloring.

The Painter became the great friend of the two "gamins." He contemplated a colossal picture of the two young lovers in the market among the meats, vegetables and fish. He dreamed of an artistic manifesto of the positivism of art—modern art, experimental and materialistic, and hoped thus to satirize the painter of ideas and to strike a blow at the old school.

For more than two years he had made studies for this purpose, but had not yet found the key-note. He had commenced a dozen canvasses, but was dissatisfied with all, and felt a certain spite against his two models on account of his unpainted picture.

Wherever he saw them, however, he joined them, and the three roamed the streets together, all in a row, compelling the people they met, to turn out for them. They learned to know each corner by its odors—the wine-shop —the pastry-cook's, and the baker's.

When they wandered through the wide new streets, la Rue du Pont Neuf and la Rue des Halles, he orated to the

gamins on their beauty and magnificence—on the birth of a new era which he felt to be near at hand—an era of originality.

But Cadine and Marjolin preferred the provincial quiet of la Rue des Bourdonnais, where they could play marbles on the curb-stones without danger of being walked on. They preferred those portions of old Paris which were still left standing—les Rues de la Poterie and de la Lingerie, with their swelled-front houses, and narrow, dark shops. They liked to loiter at the windows and adore the sweetmeats, the boxes of prunes and the candies in the confectioners' windows.

There was one shop where soap was manufactured, where Marjolin always stopped to catch the fragrance which came from the door as it was opened. Cadine insisted on looking at the barrels of anchovies and capers at a great warehouse; huge jars of pickled cucumbers and olives, with their wooden spoons. She liked the smell of pickled salmon, of hams and dried herring, and smacked her lips at the sight of the boxes of sardines.

In la Rue Coquillière they caught the smell of truffles, and there Cadine and Marjolin shut their eyes, and pretended they were eating the most delicious things.

Claude laughed at them, called them simpletons, and said he should leave them to dine on the smell of truffles.

Cadine, when she was alone, did not extend her walks so far. She had a weakness for certain places—for an especial pastry cook who displayed in la Rue Surbigo almond cakes, savarns, babas and éclairs, custards and

creams, and looked with longing eyes on the macaroons and madeleines.

The Bakery, with its clean marble counters, was almost as attractive, and yielding to temptation she would go in and buy a brioche for two sous.

Another shop opposite the Square des Innocents made her mouth water, and she vowed to herself that the day would come, when she would eat her fill of the delicacies there displayed.

Cadine also felt a longing for pretty things to wear as well as to eat, and as she walked, would select a pale blue or green silk, as that which she would like, and in the evening lingered before the jewellers in la Rue Montmartre, whose windows blazed with the white light of silver and the yellow hue of gold. The watches, bracelets, and rings did not tempt her as much, as the silver thimbles which covered a globe. She selected, however, some earrings of imitation coral, which she regarded as altogether the most beautiful things there.

One morning Claude found her transfixed before the window of a coiffeur in la Rue Saint-Honoré. She was looking, with evident longing, at the display of hair in all hues, from the palest blonde to the densest black, in the midst of which a woman's bust was slowly revolving. The woman wore a scarf of cherry satin, fastened by a brass breastpin, and the hair was dressed as a bride's—very high, with orange blossoms. The mouth wore a simple smile, and the eyelashes were stiff and preposterously long, but Cadine was completely fascinated by this beautiful creature.

Claude was furious. He shook Cadine, and asked her what she found to admire in that bust, "which looked as if it had come from the Morgue!"

Cadine and Marjolin had made the acquaintance of Léon, the apprentice of the Quenu-Gradelles. They saw him as he carried a tray to some customer, select a quiet corner, and there lift the covers and try each dish in succession. They at once felt him to be one of themselves, and Cadine determined to know him, and enjoy these delicacies with him on some future occasion. She invited him to a breakfast which she gave in a corner of the market sheltered from public observation, by a rampart of empty baskets. The table was a flat basket turned bottom upwards. They had pears, nuts, cheese and shrimps, fried potatoes and radishes. The cheese came from a fruiterer's in la Rue de la Cossonnerie, and was a present. She had purchased two cents' worth of fried potatoes on credit; the rest of the feast she had stolen.

It was a regal repast, and Léon, not wishing to be outdone, returned the civility by a supper, and gave them cold blood-pudding, sausages, pickles and ham. The *charcuterie* of the Quenu-Gradelles had provided everything. From this time suppers and breakfasts were constantly interchanged.

Never were young people happier. Marjolin constantly provided sweet surprises for Cadine in the way of delicacies, which he stole for her delectation. He had become very skilful in this respect, and helped himself like magic, as he walked between the stalls. Notwithstanding his

success, however, the *friteur* was beginning to make loud complaints. This *friteur* whom Cadine patronized had his little stall supported against the side of a tottering wall, held up by moss-covered beams, and Cadine owed him thirty sous, and was quite crushed by the debt. How should she ever pay it? She did not count on Marjolin. She never did!

She felt herself compelled to return Léon's politeness, and was quite ashamed that she could never offer him any meat. He had served to them an entire ham at a time. He had all the things which the shop could furnish, but no bread, and nothing to drink. Marjolin saw Léon kiss the girl one night, but he only laughed. He was not jealous of her.

Claude never assisted at these festivities. He had caught Cadine one day stealing a bunch of beets, and had pulled her ears well. "She should not do this," he said, and yet he felt a certain sense of amusement at seeing these happy animals picking up the crumbs of this abundance. Marjolin was in Gavard's employment, and had little to do, save to hear his master's interminable tales. While Cadine continued to sell her violets, Marjolin left her very often, to look through the windows at Madame Quenu. He experienced in looking at her a sensation as if he had eaten something that he liked, and he left the window eager to see her again. He dreamed of her every night, and contrived to see her nearly every day, as she had now taken upon herself the task of going to market, and passed Gavard's shop on her way.

The truth was, her instinct taught her that she was more likely to induce him to speak openly to her in his own shop than in hers, where he was on his guard. But in his he was quite willing to orate.

She determined to discover from him what took place at Monsieur Lebigre's, for in Mademoiselle Saget she did not place unbounded confidence. She was appalled at what Gavard told her, and two days after the explanation she had had with Quenu, she came in from market very pale.

She made a sign to her husband to follow her into the dining-room. She closed the doors and then turned toward him:

"Your brother then, is determined to send us all to the scaffold, is he? Why do you have any concealments from me?"

Quenu swore that he did not know what she meant, and then promised her never to set foot again inside the Cabaret.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"You will do wisely," she answered, "unless you wish to leave your skin there. Florent will get himself into trouble. I see it! I feel it!"

Then, after a moment's silence, she added, more calmly:

"What a foolish fellow he is! He might live here in clover if he chose, but no! he must dabble in politics. He will ruin himself, and us too. Quenu, this must end. I told you so, you remember."

Quenu caught his breath. He knew what was coming.

"He shall eat here no more," she said. "It is enough

for him to sleep here. He makes money; let him buy his own food."

Quenu tried to protest, but she closed his lips by exclaiming:

"Then choose between him and us. I swear to you that I will take my daughter and go away, if he remains. I shall speak the plain truth to you now. He is, in my opinion, a bad man, who has brought only trouble into our home. But I will soon settle it. You must choose between him and me—"

Quenu was breathless, and she left him and returned to the shop, where she weighed out a half-pound of pâtê de foie, with her affable smile.

Gavard, in a hot political discussion, to which she had adroitly led up, had said that she would soon see strange things, and made several veiled allusions, which disturbed her greatly. Her imagination at once depicted armed police, picking up Quenu, Pauline and herself, by the napes of their necks, and incarcerating them in a prison.

She was icy in her demeanor that night toward Florent. She did not help him to any dish on the table, and said several times:

"It is strange how much bread we eat lately."

Florent at last understood that he was treated like a poor relation, of whom one wishes to get rid. He had worn Quenu's old clothes for the last two months, and as Quenu was fat, and he thin, the effect of these garments was most remarkable.

Lisa also handed him over her husband's old linen; the ragged towels and sheets were sent to his room, and he no longer was treated in other ways with the consideration which had been shown him. Little Pauline made remarks which wounded him, in regard to the shabbiness of his garments.

These remarks about the bread were more than he could endure. Quenu did not look up, and pretended not to notice what was going on.

Florent, however, did not know how to get away. For a week he tried to find words in which to say, that he thought he should prefer to take his meals elsewhere. His gentle nature cherished the illusion that he should wound his brother and his sister-in-law by this proposition. He was unwilling to admit, even to himself, the hostility which Lisa felt toward him, nor did he once think, so great was his unselfishness, of his money, which his sister-in-law held in her hand.

He thought with what remained to him of his salary, and with the proceeds of the lessons he gave one pupil, that he could spend eighteen sous for his breakfast, and twenty-six for his dinner. At last, one morning he said that, as he found it impossible to be punctual at his meals, that he would take them when and where he could.

He colored as he said this. La belle Lisa was cold and stately, which troubled him greatly. She had determined not to take the initiative, but to wait until he spoke himself. And now she should get rid of him without any disagreeable scene.

But Quenu exclaimed, in some agitation:

"Eat just where you please, my dear fellow! You will remember, however, that it is your own fault if you go. You will dine with us sometimes on Sunday, however?"

Florent hastily left the room, for his heart was very full, and Lisa, when alone with Quenu, did not venture to reproach him for the weakness of which he had been guilty in this invitation for Sundays. She was victorious, and she drew a long sigh of satisfaction, and wanted to burn some sugar to get rid of the fishy smell, which she said haunted her.

At the end of a week she was not as well satisfied. She saw Florent very rarely, and she took it into her head that he was manufacturing some infernal machine up in the attic, or arranging some system of signals from his window. Gavard was apparently despondent. He left his shop in Marjolin's care, for a day at a time, and fidgeted to and fro.

La belle Lisa determined on a master-blow. She knew that Florent had asked for a few days' holiday, and proposed to pass them with Claude Lantier at Nanterre, with Madame François.

Lisa went to invite Gavard to dinner, but she could not find him. Marjolin was alone in the shop.

High above his head hung fat geese, and dead rabbits, with frightened eyes; pigeons and ducks, as yet unplucked, were on the counter; three superb turkeys, specked with blue, like a chin that has been freshly shaved, lay on their backs, while in plates were the livers, hearts, and gizzards, claws, necks and pinions.

Marjolin, among all this food, with his smooth, glossy skin, looked as if he too were good to eat. When he saw la belle Lisa, he started from his lounging position. He was always more or less timid in her presence, and stammered, in reply to her question, that he did not know where Monsieur Gavard was. He had been there an hour before, but had gone away, without saying when he would return. She stooped to caress a rabbit in a box, saying as she did so:

"Do you not think you could find him?"

"He may be in the poultry-rooms in the cellar," answered Marjolin.

"I will wait for him, then," said Lisa; "or better still, why can't I go down there? I have wanted to go for five years, and you will show me the way, will you not?"

The youth stammered forth a confused expression of willingness to do anything she desired.

But the heavy air of the cellar suffocated "*la belle charcutière.*" She stood on the steps, and looked up at the arched ceiling and at the heavy columns. She hesitated on account of the penetrating odor—the exhalation from living creatures, which scorched her throat with their alkalies.

"The smell is horrible," she said. "It would not be healthy to live here."

"I am perfectly well, Madame," said Marjolin, much astonished. "The smell is not so bad, when one is accustomed to it."

She followed him, saying that the smell disgusted her

with fowls, and she should not want to eat any for two months.

The poultry-houses stood in straight lines, with occasional gas-lights between, and the aspect was that of a village at midnight, when all its inhabitants are asleep. At each corner was a long blue board, on which were inscribed the names of the tenants.

"Monsieur Gavard is way at the back," said the young man.

They turned into a dark corner, but no Gavard was to be seen.

"Never mind, Madame. I will show you the fowls myself, for I have a key."

La belle Lisa followed, and stumbled against him.

"If you think," she said, "that I can see anything in this darkness, you are very much mistaken."

He did not reply instantly, but at last stammered that there was always a candle inside, that he could light. But he fumbled a long time over the lock. She tried to assist him, and felt his breath hot on her neck. When he lighted the candle, she saw that his hands trembled.

"Simpleton!" she cried; "the idea of getting into such a state of excitement because a door can't be opened. I should think you were a nervous girl."

Gavard had hired two compartments, and made them into one poultry-room by taking away the partitions. Turkeys, geese and ducks were picking in the dung heaps; while on shelves, built in three rows, one above another, were boxes with gratings over them, containing chickens and rabbits.

The place was incredibly dirty, and hung with gray spiders' webs. But Lisa was too civil to show her disgust. She looked into the boxes, and compassionated the poor chickens, who were shut out from the light of day, and could not even stand and move about. The young man showed her a duck whose leg was broken, and said they should kill him that evening for fear he would die during the night.

"But," she said, "when do they eat?"

He explained that they did not eat without light, and that he, or Gavard, was obliged to light a candle, and wait until the creatures had got through their meals.

"I like to watch them," he continued. "It is droll to see them fight. Sometimes I shade the light with my hand, and they stand perfectly still, and then put their heads under their wings, as if the sun had set. It is against the regulations to go away and leave a light here. One of the poultry-women nearly set the place on fire the other day."

"Your poultry require a good deal of waiting on," said Lisa, "if they must have a candle lighted for each meal."

As she spoke she passed out of the room, raising her skirts from out of the filth. He blew out the candle, and locked the door. She hurried on, not liking to be left with this youth in the darkness.

When he joined her, she said:

"I am glad to have seen this. There are certainly many odd things under the Halles. I am very much obliged, but I must hurry home now. If Monsieur

Gavard comes in, pray tell him that I must speak to him at once."

"He is probably at the '*Abatage*,'" answered Marjolin. "Let us go and see."

She did not reply. The close air of the place made her very uncomfortable, and it annoyed her to have Marjolin so close to her. He breathed hard too, as if the air affected him also. She stepped back a little, and motioned to him to precede her. She fancied that her companion guided her in a very roundabout way. When they came out in front of the underground railway, he told her that he wanted to show it to her. They stood for a few moments, looking through the beams of the protecting wall.

On their way back they found Mother Palette in front of her poultry-house, taking the cords off of a large basket, from which a furious noise of wings and claws was heard. When she loosened the last knot, the geese within, raised the cover with their powerful heads, and escaped, running and flying with loud hisses, which resounded through the arched cellar. Lisa could not help laughing, while the poultry-woman swore like a pirate, and succeeded in catching two, while Marjolin started in pursuit of a third. He was heard running at full-speed, laughing and much amused by this unlooked-for frolic. Then there was a sound of a struggle, and he soon returned with the bird.

Mother Palette, an old, yellow woman, took it and held it for a moment in the position of the antique Leda.

"I don't know, I am sure, what I should have done, Marjolin, if you had not been here. The other day I fought with one, but I had my knife, and cut its throat at last."

Marjolin was all out of breath, and Lisa caught a strange light in his eyes, as together they reached the *Abatage*. Generally he dropped his eyes when she spoke to him.

For the first time she realized his superb beauty, his square shoulders, and his bright complexion and blonde hair. She looked at him with the frank admiration which women often fearlessly evince toward very young men.

He became once more timid and embarrassed.

"You see that Monsieur Gavard is not here," she said, "and I am wasting my time."

He explained to her the *Abatage*, showed her the huge blocks of stone, lighted by gas. One woman was plucking chickens, which led him to say, that they often plucked them alive, because it was so much easier. He told her to take up a handful of the feathers, which were piled up there, and said they were sold at nine sous the pound. She put her hand into the baskets of down. He called her attention to the water-faucets at each pillar, and told her that all spots of blood were washed up every two hours by men whose especial duty it was. He added that in great rain-storms, the water often invaded these cellars, once to the height of three centimètres, on which occasion he was obliged to take all his poultry to the upper

end. He laughed as he described the fright of the creatures.

He finished by showing her the ventilators, "which carried off all bad odors."

This seemed to her a ridiculous thing to say, so thoroughly was the air impregnated by the ammoniated smell of the guano. Marjolin seemed in a state of suppressed excitement, and was no longer timid.

"You are a good boy," said La belle Lisa, "to have shown me all this. When you come to my shop I will give you something."

Forgetting his age, and remembering only, that she had known him since his babyhood, she took him by the chin as she spoke. If her hand lingered, it was unconsciously, though she was by no means as calm as usual herself. He, at this caress, glanced quickly around, assured himself that no one was near, and caught La belle Lisa by the waist, and threw her into a huge crate of feathers. She, pale and trembling at this brutal attack, sprang up and raised her large, round arms, and struck a blow, just such as she had seen struck at the abattoirs, fair between the eyes. He fell, and his head struck one of the stones. At this moment a cock crowed loudly.

La belle Lisa was chilled through and through. Her lips were white. Over her head she heard the dull roar of the Halles. Through the gratings came the street sounds, and she thought that only the strength of her own arms had saved her.

She shook off the feathers that had adhered to her

skirts. Fearing to be seen, and without a glance at Marjolin, she hurried to the stair-case. Daylight and the fresh air were a great relief.

She entered her shop, perfectly calm, and only a little paler than usual.

"Where have you been so long?" said Quenu.

"Looking for Gavard," she answered, quietly. "I could not find him, and we must eat our leg of mutton without him."

She filled up several pots with lard, prepared some chops for her friend, Madame Taboureau, whose little servant was waiting. As she broke the bones with her mallet, she thought of Marjolin lying in the cellar, but felt no pang of self-reproach. She had only done her duty. She looked at Quenu; he certainly was very plain, and his skin was very rough, and his chin far from velvety, while the skin and the chin of the other were like down. She said to herself with a sigh, that it was a pity for children to grow up so fast.

Quenu was struck by her beauty.

"You ought to go out oftener," he said. "If you wish, we will go to the theatre sometimes—to the Gaieté, where Madame Taboureau saw that play she liked so much."

Lisa smiled and said she would see, and then went out again. Quenu thought she was very good to run after Gavard in that way, but she had only gone up-stairs to Florent's room, the key of which hung on a nail in the kitchen.

She hoped, as she could not get hold of Gavard, to

make some discoveries here. She went about the room, examined the bed and looked at the mantel-shelf. The window was open, and the plants were drinking in the soft air. She could find not the smallest trace of Florent's presence. She was astonished at this. She touched Augustine's dress, still hanging in the corner, and then took a seat at the table, reading a half-finished page, in which the word Revolution occurred several times. She was frightened at this, and opened the drawer, which she saw was full of papers. She sat looking at them, when the bird uttered a long, shrill cry. She started, and realized the ignominy of the act she was about to commit. She closed the drawer.

She went to the window, and standing there, said to herself that she would take counsel of the Abbé Roustan, a man of good sound sense. As she mechanically looked down on the Square below, she beheld Cadine weeping in the centre of a crowd, while Florent and Claude were talking earnestly together a little apart. She hurried down-stairs, surprised at their speedy return. Hardly was she established behind her counter, than Mademoiselle Saget entered, saying:

"Come and see poor Marjolin, Madame. He was found in the cellar unconscious, and a great gash cut in his head."

Lisa hurried across the street. The youth lay with his eyes closed, and his fair hair stained with blood. Some one among the crowd said it was nothing, that it was his own fault, that he was always foolhardy, and jumping over

the tables at the *Abatage*. This was one of his favorite amusements, and he had undoubtedly fallen in that way.

Mademoiselle Saget pointed to the weeping Cadine.

"Probably that little scamp pushed him. They are always in mischief."

Marjolin, revived by the fresh air, opened his eyes. He caught sight of Lisa's face bending over him, and smiled faintly. He did not seem to remember anything that had taken place. Lisa said calmly that he ought to be taken at once to the Hospital. She would go and see him, and carry him some delicacies.

He was put on a litter, and Cadine followed it, still with her wicker tray suspended around her neck, and her bunches of violets stuck into the moss, which she watered with her hot tears.

As Lisa entered her shop, she heard Claude say to Florent, as they were separating:

"That boy has spoiled my day; but we did have a good time!"

Claude and Florent had indeed brought back with them something of the fresh air of the country. That morning before daybreak they went to find Madame François, who had just sold her last vegetable. They then, the three together, went to the Compas d'or, in the Rue Montorgueil, for the wagon. This was almost a foretaste of the country.

Behind the Restaurant Philippe, whose gorgeous gilding illuminated the entire lower floor, was a regular farm-yard, smelling of fresh straw and warm dung; young chickens and hens picked the soft earth, stalls and sheds

of all sorts and sizes were built against the neighboring houses. Balthasar, all harnessed, was eating his oats comfortably under shelter.

He was, nevertheless, quite ready to return to Nanterre, but he did not go back unloaded. The market-woman had made a bargain with the company, who had contracted to keep the Halles clean; she carried home with her three times in the week, a load of refuse taken up with a pitch-fork from the heap swept together in the centre of the Square, which was a valuable addition to her manure-heap.

Claude and Florent lay on the coarse sheet she spread over these green leaves. Madame François took the reins, and Balthasar started forth, his head a little low on account of the unusual burthen he carried.

This visit had been long talked of. The market-woman was as gay as a lark; she liked the two men, and promised them such a breakfast as they had never eaten in that "miserable place—Paris," and they enjoyed the prospect of the long idle day before them.

"Are you comfortable?" asked Madame François, as she turned into la Rue Pont Neuf.

"Yes; as cosy as two peas in a pod," answered Claude, gayly. He lay on his back, watching the stars paling in the sky, and the growing light in the east. They listened to the good woman talking to Balthasar.

"Take your ease, old fellow," she said, softly. "We are in no such great hurry!"

They reached the Champs Elysées, and the painter saw

trees on either side, and beyond the green mass of the gardens of the Tuileries. As they passed the Rue du Roule, he looked at the side door of Saint-Eustache in the distance.

"Do you know," he said, suddenly, "that iron is destined to kill stone? It is not by accident that we see Saint-Eustache through one of the long avenues of Les Halles. It is a fatality. It is Modern Art—Realism—Nature—whatever you may choose to call it, which has grown up in the face of Ancient Art. You do not agree with me?"

As Florent did not speak, he continued:

"This church is not a pure architecture. The Moyen-Age is dying in it, and the Renaissance is not yet on its feet. But have you noticed the Churches which are built in these times? They are like Observatories, Libraries, Hospitals—like anything, in fact, but Churches; and it would be difficult to convince me that le bon Dieu looks upon them as suitable. The masons who loved Him are dead, and it would be wiser not to erect any more of these ugly constructions. Since the beginning of this century but one original monument has been built—the natural outgrowth of the epoch—and this is the Halles. These Markets, I tell you, are a timid revelation of the spirit of the twentieth century, and this is why Saint-Eustache is nearly obscured. There it stands empty, while the Halles have grown up around it, crowded with life."

"Look at Balthasar," said Madame François, laughing. "The woman who brought you safely into the world

earned her money; for you make even animals listen to you when you speak!"

The carriage went slowly on. At this early hour the avenue was deserted. There were no rows of chairs on the sidewalk, and the turf lay dark under the trees. At the Rond-Point, a lady and gentleman on horseback passed, and Florent closed his eyes the better to enjoy the sweetness of the fresh breeze. He was happy in getting away from the Halles, happy to breathe an air uncontaminated by the smell of food.

"They say," continued Claude, "that industry kills poetry, and the fools weep over flowers, as if any one proposed to hurt the flowers. These people fret me to death. I want to answer their moans by a work which they must needs accept as a defiance. It would amuse me to startle these good people a little. Shall I tell you the thing which pleases me best of all I have ever done in my life? It is quite a story.

"Last year, on Christmas eve, I was at my Aunt Lisa's, and that goose of a fellow, Auguste, was dressing the shop windows, and the counters. I looked on until I could bear it no longer, and told him I would do it myself. You see, I had all the strong colors I required. The red of the tongues; the yellow of the small hams; blue in the paper; pink in the delicate slices, which were cut; green in the carrot and lettuce leaves, and such a black as I could never find on my palette, in the blood puddings. The sausages, chitterlings and breaded pigs' feet gave me delicious tones of gray. I made a superb thing of it.

I took my dishes, plates, jars and bottles, and massed them together. I arrayed the tongues so that they looked like scarlet flames, and a large truffled turkey lay in the centre. I tell you it was simply superb, and the crowd that gathered before the window thought the same. But Aunt Lisa, when she appeared, was quite shocked, and bade Auguste arrange the window as usual. And of course he did not grasp the idea of the reds being brought out by the grays, and of course it was hopeless to try and make him see it. Never mind; it was the best thing I ever did!"

Claude sank into silence, smiling at his thoughts. The wagon had reached the Arc de Triomphe. The wind blew strongly down the various open avenues around the immense Square. Florent leaned out and drank in the breath of the green grass, which blew toward him from the fortifications. At the top of la Rue de Longchamps, Madame François showed him the place where she had picked him up.

He fell into a deep reverie, and as he looked at the market-woman, he thought her look of health and benignant sweetness of expression made her more beautiful than Lisa.

When they reached Nanterre, the carriage turned to the left and entered a narrow lane, running along the walls, and stopped in an enclosure from which there was no outlet. "It was the end of the world," the market-woman said. There they were to leave their load of cabbage-leaves and green stuff. Claude and Florent bade

the boy, who was planting out lettuce, to go on with his work, while they, armed with pitchforks, threw out the heap. This amused them, and Claude had a good deal to say about the refuse from the market being sent back again, in the form of new generations of vegetables and fruits. Paris consumed everything—returned everything to the earth, which in due time repaired all damages.

"There is a cabbage-stump which I recognize," said Claude, as he took up the last on his pitch-fork. "This is the tenth time, at the very least, that it has grown up in that corner by the apricot-tree."

Florent laughed, but his smiles faded as he walked on. Claude was making a sketch, and Madame François was preparing breakfast.

This garden was a long narrow strip, from the extremity of which he could see the low casemates of Mont-Valérien, which were divided by row after row of evergreen hedges, from the little garden of Madame François.

A great peace brooded over the landscape. The May sunshine had brought out insect life, and a gentle humming of bees fell upon the stillness. The garden was laid off in squares, sorrel and spinach, radishes, carrots and beets. Cabbages and potatoes stood in regular lines, while peas and beans were sending out their slender tendrils. Not a weed was to be seen. The ground looked as if it were swept every morning. Borders of Thyme put a gray fringe to the two sides of the wide path.

Florent enjoyed this breath of Thyme, brought out by the hot sun. He loved the country, and all growing

things. For a year he had seen none, except those torn from the ground. He liked to see the vegetables here, whole and hearty. The cabbages were luxuriant; the carrots were gay, and the salads looked contented and crisp.

The markets which he had left behind him he looked back upon as a vast cemetery, where only dead things lay. The noise and the smell of the fish-market seemed to him a thing of the past. Yes, Claude was right. The earth was life—the cradle and the health of the world.

"Your omelette is ready!" cried the market-woman, from the door.

When the three sat round the table, with the sunshine streaming in at the open door, they were all so gay that Madame François looked at Florent in astonishment.

"I declare!" she said. "You are ten years younger. Your eyes have a laugh in them that I never saw there before. You ought not to live in a city; come and live here."

But Claude interfered. He said that Paris was superb. He even defended the gutters, although he admitted that he adored the country.

In the afternoon, Florent and Madame François were alone in a corner of the garden, where a few fruit-trees were planted. She was giving him some maternal advice. She asked him what he meant to do with himself, and her questions evidently arose from friendly interest, with no admixture of curiosity. He was deeply touched, for no woman had ever before shown so much interest in him.

She reminded him of a healthy out-of-door plant, while Lisa, Claire and La Normande were doubtful, and arranged for sale, so to speak.

About five o'clock the two men started for Paris. They were going to walk, and Madame François went to the end of the lane with them. She there took Florent's hand.

"Come here," she said, "if you are ever in sorrow."

For a half hour Florent walked on in silence, feeling that he left health, safety and happiness behind him. The road was white with dust, clouds of which arose each time they brought their feet down. The sun was low, and their shadows stretched far upon the opposite sidewalk.

Claude, with swinging arms, took long, regular strides, and looked at their shadows. Then arousing himself, as if from a dream, he said:

"Do you know the Battle of the Fat and the Lean?"

Florent said "No," in some surprise, whereupon Claude went off into enthusiastic praise of this series of engravings. He described certain ones. The Fat men, enormously stout, preparing for their evening gourmandizing, while the Thin men, bowed by fasting, looked in from the street with covetous eyes, and then again the Fat ones, at table, with cheeks stuffed full, dismissing a Lean one, who had been audacious enough to enter, and who looked like a needle among bullets. He saw in this the drama of human life, and ended by classifying men into the Fat and the Lean—natural enemies—where the one devoured the other.

"You may be sure," he said, "that Cain was fat, and Abel thin. Ever since the first murder, there has always been a constant battle of the strong against the weak, each swallowing his neighbor, and being swallowed in turn. So look out, my boy; distrust Fat people as a rule."

He relapsed into silence, and watched their shadows.

"We are the Thin ones, you see. Tell me, as flat as we are, with no bellies to speak of, ought we to claim much sunshine?"

Florent smiled, but Claude was in earnest.

"You may laugh," he continued, "but it is no laughing matter. If I were fat, I should paint quietly, have a fine studio, and sell my pictures for their weight in gold. Instead of that, I am thin, and when I die, I shall probably be put between two leaves of a book, instead of having a coffin bought in which to bury me decently, as would be the case, were I double my weight. But you are worse than I! You are really the King of Lean Men. Do you remember the day you quarrelled with the fish-women? It was a magnificent sight, their heaving breasts and broad shoulders, in contrast to your meagre form. They acted as I tell you. Their instinct was to drive the thin man from among them, for the Fat dislike and distrust the Thin. And were I you, I should act on these suggestions. The Quenus are fat; so are the Mehudens. In fact, you are surrounded by fat people. I should get out of it, if I were you!"

"And Gavard, Mademoiselle Saget, and your friend Marjolin, what of them?" asked Florent, still smiling.

"Oh! I will classify all our acquaintances, if you say so. I have had every one of their heads in my portfolio for a long time, with the indication of the order to which they belong. It is a chapter of Natural History. Gavard is a Fat man, but wishes to be included among the Thin. That is quite a common variety. Mademoiselle Saget and Madame Lecœur are Thin, and much to be feared, as they are ready to commit any enormity in order to be enrolled among the Fat, while Marjolin, Cadine, and La Sarriette are among the Fat, but they are, as yet, so young that their worst qualities are not developed. It is worthy of remark that the young belonging to the Fat class are altogether charming. Your political acquaintances, of course, are among the Thin."

The Painter rambled on in this way all the way from the Pont de Neuilly to the Arc de Triomphe.

"But where do you place Madame François?" said Florent, finally.

Claude was considerably embarrassed by this question. He hesitated.

"Madame François—Madame François—No; I do not know just where to place her. She is a good woman, and that is enough." They both laughed. At this moment they stood before the Arc de Triomphe. The sun was so low in the horizon, that their colossal shadows fell upon the monument, higher, even, than the enormous statues, like two dark stains.

"See here!" cried Claude, as he took his friend's arm. "If we go on like this, when the sun has set our two heads will touch the sky!"

But Florent laughed no more. Paris had reabsorbed him. That Paris which, ever since his sojourn at Cayenne, he had regarded with terror and distrust. When he reached the Halles, the smells were suffocating, and he bowed his head, ready to take up again the burthen of his nightmare, haunted by a longing for the country, and the breath of Thyme.

## CHAPTER V.

### DUTY BEFORE ALL.

THE next day, about four o'clock, Lisa went to church. She had made, in honor of this intention, a very careful toilette—a black silk and a French cashmere shawl. La belle Normande watched her until the door of Saint-Eustache closed upon her.

Lisa was not religious, and made no pretensions to being so; said that she wished to do her duty to her neighbors and to herself. But she did not allow any one to speak lightly of religion in her presence, and always silenced Gavard when he wished to narrate some vile stories of Priests and Nuns. She was politic, and wished to respect every one's scruples. Besides, so far as she knew, Priests were worthy of all respect. She knew personally the Abbé Roustan, at Saint-Eustache, and had the greatest regard for him.

She insisted that most people needed the daily guidance of religion. She looked upon it as she did on the police, as necessary to maintain order, and without which no government could possibly stand.

When Gavard declared that some day Curés would be nowhere, she would shrug her shoulders impatiently.

When Lisa, therefore, went to church, her demeanor was very quiet. She had purchased a beautiful prayer-

book, which she opened only at the marriage and burial services. She stood and she knelt at the right moments with all due solemnity. In her opinion, it was only right that respectable settled people should have a certain regard for the outward observances of religion. On the day of which we write, the fair charcutière, on entering Saint-Eustache, let the inner door, covered with green cloth, slip softly from her hand. She dipped her fingers in the Bénitier, and crossed herself correctly. Then, with a soft footfall, she went on to the chapelle of Saint-Agnes, where two women, kneeling with their faces in their hands, waited for the third, whose blue dress was seen surging over the threshold of the Confessional.

Lisa seemed to be annoyed, and she said to a beadle, who was passing:

"Does the Abbé Roustan confess to-day?"

He replied that Monsieur l'Abbe would not be long now, and if she chose to take a chair, her turn would soon come. She thanked him, but did not say that she had not come for confession. She determined to wait, and walked about the church softly, went down to the door, and looked up the centre aisle to the altar. The church was nearly empty, but from the Confessional came a low whispering. She went toward it, and beheld the blue robe still at the feet of the Abbé Roustan.

"Mercy!" she said to herself. "I could tell all my sins in ten seconds."

Back of the great altar, in the shadow of the double rows of pillars, the Chapel of the Virgin is always dark

and silent. Women are always there, kneeling in prayer.

Lisa stood looking about. She was not nervous, but she vaguely wondered why they did not light the lustres. It would be much gayer than those triangular candlesticks which dropped their wax constantly. An old woman was at that moment taking up the large drops with a broad-bladed knife.

And in this profound silence she heard the roar of the fiacres, rolling through the street behind the red and purple saints on the windows.

As she was about to leave the chapel she saw Claire, the youngest Mehuden, enter. She lighted a candle, and then knelt down behind a pillar, so pale and dishevelled that she looked as if she were dead. Believing that no one saw her, she abandoned herself to an agony of prayer and tears. Lisa was utterly amazed. Never had she supposed that one of the Mehudens was religious. Claire, in fact, usually spoke of religion and of priests in a fashion that was enough to make one's hair rise on one's head.

"What on earth has got into her?" said Lisa, as she went again toward the other end of the church. "Can the creature have poisoned any one of her men?"

At last the Abbé emerged from his Confessional. He was a handsome man of forty, with a good, kindly face. When he saw Madame Quenu, he shook hands with her and called her "dear Madame," led her into the vestry where he took off his surplice, and then the two came

out again, he bareheaded in his soutane, and they walked up and down one of the aisles talking in low voices. The sun was low, and shone on the long windows, but the church was gradually growing very dark.

Lisa explained all her troubles to the Abbé. There was never any question of religion between them. She never went to confession, but she had formed the habit of consulting him on all critical questions. He was always patient with her. He had advised her in regard to her investments, untied the knot of many difficult matters, recommended trades-people, and, in short, showed himself to be a most useful friend, having an answer ready to all questions, no matter how complicated they might be, without seeking any personal benefit or any glory for religion. A word of thanks and a smile was enough; he always seemed glad to oblige this handsome woman, of whom his housekeeper always spoke with so much respect.

On this occasion the matter under discussion was a most delicate one, for he was by no means sure to what extent she was authorized in interfering with her brother-in-law's movements. She asked this question, and also several others, among them where she could go with her child in case of absolute danger. She wished to know if she could watch Florent, and examine his papers in order to guard her husband, daughter and herself from the consequences of his imprudence. She did not ask these questions brutally; she weighed each word she uttered, and they were so well chosen, that the Abbé was not compelled to enter into any personalities. His answers were

somewhat contradictory, but he ended by saying that an honest nature had the right to prevent evil, or rather that it was his duty to prevent evil, even if to do so, he were obliged to employ somewhat questionable means.

"This is my opinion, dear lady," he said in conclusion. "This question of means is always a most troublesome one, and one which is a great pitfall for careless feet. But I know your honesty. Weigh each one of your acts, and if your conscience is satisfied, go on boldly. Honest natures have the marvellous faculty of putting something of their own honesty into all they touch."

And with a sudden change of tone, he added:

"Say to Monsieur Quenu that I am glad to hear that he is well, and to dear little Pauline, that I am coming to see her soon. Au revoir, dear lady; may all go well with you."

He returned to the vestry, and Lisa as she went out had the curiosity to see if Claire was still kneeling. But Claire had returned to her carp and her eels, and before the Chapel of the Virgin there was nothing but several turned-over chairs to indicate that any one had been there.

When Lisa crossed the Square again, La Normande, who had been watching for her, knew her by the amplitude of her skirts, dark as it had grown.

"Well, well!" she said. "The creature has been there more than an hour. What now, I wonder?"

The next morning Lisa went up to Florent's room. She was quite sure that she should not be disturbed, but was prepared to say, if Florent should chance to come in, that

she wanted to measure the bed for new sheets. Taking her seat at the little table, she took out the drawer, emptied it carefully, and as she examined the papers, replaced them just as she found them.

She examined the first chapters of the work on Cayenne, then the rough sketches of the proposed changes of the organization of the market.

These pages of fine writing did not interest her in the least, and she was about to replace the drawer convinced that it was elsewhere that Florent concealed the evidences of his infamous plots. Suddenly her hand fell on an envelope which contained a photograph of La belle Normande. The photograph was too dark. La Normande stood with her right arm resting on a broken pillar, and she wore all her trinkets, a much trimmed black silk, and an insolent smile.

Lisa forgot her brother-in-law, and the terrors which had sent her there. She was absorbed in one of those contemplations with which a woman, when not afraid of being seen, examines another woman—her rival, past, present or to come. She looked at the hair, the nose and the mouth; held the photograph at a distance, and then scrutinized it closely. She turned it over: on the back was written: "Louise to her friend Florent."

She was tempted to take possession of this carte, and use it at some future time against her adversary. She decided, however, that this would not do—that it was not right. Besides, could she not always find it where it was?

The idea then struck her, that she had not looked at

the back of the drawer among Augustine's needles and cottons. Between the prayer book and the book of dreams, she found that for which she was looking: the most compromising notes protected simply by a sheet of gray paper.

The idea of a rising—of the tearing down of the Empire, advanced one night by Logre, had slowly ripened in Florent's brain. He fancied now that it was his duty—his mission, and the end for which he had been allowed to return from Cayenne. He had formed a plan to induce the Halles to rise in open revolt. As they held the supplies for this great city, they had, he felt, the matter in their own hands.

Florent was unhappy all day long. His avocations were utterly distasteful to him. He slept but indifferently, and when he returned from the Cabaret late, he had nothing to do but to write and prepare the famous insurrection.

He had divided Paris into twenty sections, each having its chief, a sort of general, who had under his orders twenty lieutenants commanding twenty companies. Each week a consultation would be held by these chiefs; each time in a different place. He deemed it advisable also, that each of these companies should believe themselves charged with some imaginary mission, which would most effectually bewilder the police.

As to the setting these forces in operation, the means were simple enough. They would simply await the first political excitement after their organization was complete,

and then they would take advantage of it. The details of this vague outline Florent worked upon regularly every evening, as if it had been a drama he was writing, and sketched them on scraps of paper, which each demonstrated to a keen observer, the mingled shrewdness and childishness of their author.

When Lisa had looked over these papers, they fell from her trembling hands. She felt as if she dared not touch them any more than she would have handled gunpowder.

One note terrified her more than the others: it was a half sheet of paper on which Florent had drawn, with colored crayons, the form of the insignia which should distinguish the chiefs and the lieutenants. This fact, that the generals were to wear red scarfs, brought the danger well home to Lisa. She saw the crowd pass before her shop and fire through her beautiful plate-glass windows, shattering her mirrors and her marble counters. Her brother-in-law seemed to have attacked her personally, and by his nefarious projects ruined her happiness. She closed the drawer, and looked around the room. Could it be possible that she had sheltered this man—that he had slept in this bed, and that these incendiary documents were in the drawer of that innocent-looking table, which she had so long used at Uncle Gradelle's before her marriage? She stood motionless, wondering what she had best do. First, it was useless to attempt any drilling of Quenu: he would never do what she wanted, as she wanted him. She almost decided on an explanation with Florent, but she feared that he would simply take himself

off and compromise them as much somewhere else. On the whole, it was best to keep him under her observation. She should know then the first danger, and be able to take the requisite steps to avoid it.

When she went into the shop, she found Augustine in a state of great excitement. Pauline had not been seen for an hour. To Lisa's impetuous questions, she could only say:

"She was on the sidewalk by the door with a little boy. I was looking at them, but several customers came in, one after another, and I waited upon them, and it was some time before I missed the child."

"It was Much. I am sure it was Much!" answered the *charcutière*. "Oh! what a torment he is."

It was Much. Pauline, who wore a new dress that day, wished to show it. So she paraded up and down before the shop with all the tremendous gravity of a neat little girl, who is afraid of getting herself and her fine clothes dirty. Her skirts were very short and stiffly starched, setting out like those of a ballet-dancer, showing her well-fitting cotton hose without one wrinkle, and her shining boots, which were as blue as the sky. Her white apron was low in the neck, and displayed her white shoulders and dimpled, rosy arms. She wore tiny turquoise ear-rings, and a blue ribbon in her carefully brushed hair. There was something of her mother's tender sweetness in the child's expression, while her whole air was that of a French doll.

Much, over in the market, had seen her. He had just

put into the gutter some tiny dead whiting, and as the water bore them away, he declared they were swimming. But seeing Pauline so fair and fresh, he forgot his fish, and dashed across the gutter, without shoes or stockings, his torn jacket showing his shirt.

His mother had absolutely forbidden him ever to play with "that child, whose parents stuffed her until she was ready to burst." But he cared little for this. He stood and looked at Pauline a minute or two, and then went nearer and touched her blue dress. Pauline was flattered, but she frowned, and said, pettishly:

"Do go away. My mother does not like me to play with you."

At this Much laughed immoderately.

"Who cares?" he answered promptly, already cherishing in his wicked little head a plan to soil the freshness of Pauline's pretty garments. The child's instinct must have told her this, for she retreated at once. Then he became more gentle.

"What a pretty little cross that is on your neck! Is it your mother's?"

Pauline tossed her head, and said it was her own. He coaxed her along as far as the corner of la Rue Pirouette. He asked how her skirts could ever have been made so stiff, at which the child colored with pleasure. But she was much annoyed that no one in the street seemed to notice her.

"Come along!" said Much; but the child refused.

He held up a sou, and little Pauline followed it blindly.

"What do you like best?" he asked.

She did not reply at once, for the truth was, that she liked many things. He named over several: molasses candy, gum-balls, powdered sugar. The last made the child hesitate. She could dip her finger into the sugar and suck it. It was awfully good. She was very serious, but suddenly exclaimed:

"No; I like *cornets* best."

He took her hand and led her on, without any resistance on her part. They crossed la Rue Rambuteau, following the wide sidewalk until they reached a grocer's in la Rue de la Cossonerie, which was quite famous for his *cornets*.

*Cornets* are horns of paper, in which confectioners put the débris of their bottles and boxes, broken sugar-plums, marrons glaces, which have crumbled to pieces, and all such odds and ends. Much did things in very good style. He allowed Pauline to choose her *cornet*, which was blue to match her dress, and laid down his sou. When Pauline was outside the shop, she opened the paper and poured the contents into the two pockets of her apron, and the pockets were so tiny that they bulged out.

Then she began to eat slowly and leisurely, wetting her finger to catch the tiniest crumb. This naturally melted the sugar, and soon two brown spots disfigured her dainty apron.

Much laughed in mischievous glee, and pulling her along, he said:

"Come and play! come and play!"

They entered the Square, which was the place where Much had originally intended to take his conquest. He did the

honors of the Square as if it were his own domain. Never had Pauline been so far from home. The fountain was running, and Jean Gorgeous nymphs bending over their urns, gave a touch of grace to the Quartier Saint-Denis.

The children looked at the water falling into the huge basins, and wondered if they could not creep under the evergreens against the railing.

Much, who had by this time succeeded in his fell intention of crumpling the beautiful dress in the rear, now proposed that they should throw sand at each other.

This proposition delighted Pauline's heart. They threw the sand, which fell down the neck of the little one's dress, and ran down to her shoes and stockings. Much was delighted at seeing the pretty white apron becoming a dirty yellow, but it was still far too clean in his eyes.

"I know how to make beautiful gardens," he said.

"Gardens!" murmured Pauline, full of admiration.

Then, as the police were not to be seen, he dug several holes in the gravel walk. She was on her knees in the middle of the soft earth, and would suddenly throw herself forward with her lovely little arms buried up to the elbows in the sand. He went to look for bits of wood and sprigs of verdure, and finally ventured to break off a branch from a tree. He stripped this branch into small bits, which he planted in the holes dug by Pauline, none of which he declared were deep enough.

When at last their garden was made, and she rose to her feet, Much was enchanted, for she was as dirty a little

object as was ever seen. Her very hair was filled with sand.

"Now we must water them!" he exclaimed, clapping his hands. "They won't grow without water, you know."

This was the finishing touch. They left the Square, scooped up the water from the gutter in their hands, and ran back to water the plants in their garden. Pauline, who was fat and did not know how to run, let all the water drip through her fingers, so that on the sixth journey she looked as if she had been rolled in the gutter. Much thought her prettier when she was dirty than when clean. He made her sit down and look at their garden, which, he declared, was growing—he took her hand and called her his little wife.

"You are not sorry you came, are you?" he asked. "I know lots of games, and we will play them all, only you must not say anything about it to mamma. If you do, I will pull your hair whenever I pass your shop."

Pauline said "yes," again; while he, as a last bit of gallantry, filled the two pockets of her apron with earth. He gave her a little pinch, out of pure mischief, and she began to cry. Her sweets were gone, her garden was made, and she wished to go home.

But Much shook his head, and said he really did not know about that. The little girl began to sob, and he would certainly have beaten her, to compel her to hold her tongue, had not Mademoiselle suddenly appeared on the scene.

"Good heavens!" she cried, "can this be Pauline? Let her alone, you abominable little scamp!"

The old maid took Pauline by the hand, with many exclamations at the pitiable state of her garments. Much was not in the smallest degree frightened. He followed them, chuckling over the success of his self-appointed task, and declaring vociferously that it was all the child's fault —she had insisted on going with him, and then she had fallen.

Mademoiselle Saget was familiar with this Square. She often came there and took her seat on one of the benches among the common people. By her side some sallow woman was mending stockings or darning handkerchiefs, while watching her dirty children at play before her.

Here she overheard many a bit of gossip that interested her—many a slanderous tale of the people of the Quartier —tales which emanated from the Concierges, and which whetted her curiosity to know more. She soon learned who lived on every floor of the houses built on the three sides of the Square. The Restaurant Baratte interested her particularly, with its wine-shop and gay awnings. She liked to watch this pasteboard-like temple affixed to a decrepid old house. Behind the shades she knew that good meals were being served all the time.

Pauline was now crying bitterly. The old maid placed her on a bench near the gate, and said:

"Come, now, don't cry any more; the police will come if you do. I will take you home to your mother, and you know that I am your friend."

But the child could not restrain herself, and Mademoi-

selle Saget allowed her to sob until she was tired. The poor little image was indescribable. She had wiped her tears away with her dirty little hands, and she was mud to the roots of her hair. When she was calmed down, the old maid said, sweetly:

"Your mother is good to you, is she not? She loves you—"

"Yes, yes," murmured the child.

"And your father is good, too? He never whips you, and he never quarrels with your mamma? What do they say at night, when they go to bed?"

"I don't know; I am always asleep."

"Do they talk about your Cousin Florent?"

"I don't know."

Mademoiselle Saget put on a very severe look, and rose as if to go away. "I am afraid you tell stories. That is very wrong, and, if you can't speak the truth, I shall go away and leave you with Much—Much will whip you."

Much, who was leaning over the back of the bench, said, in his decided tone:

"She is a little goose, and she never hears anything; but I know that my good friend Florent turned every color of the rainbow, when my mother told him he could kiss her if he wanted to."

Pauline lifted up her voice, now, in a wail of childish agony.

"Hush!" said the old woman, shaking her violently. "I am not going away. I will buy you some sugar, too, if you are quiet. Then you do not like your Cousin Florent?"

"No; mamma says he is not good."

"There, now, you see your mamma did say something."

"And one night—I had Monton sleeping with me—one night she said to papa: 'Your brother has escaped from the galleys only to take us back with him.'"

Mademoiselle Saget uttered a sharp exclamation, and started to her feet. A ray of light struck her full in the face. She snatched Pauline's hand and hurried her along, her lips compressed, but a fierce light in her eyes. At the corner of la Rue Pirouette, Much suddenly disappeared, in spite of the reluctance he felt to lose the pleasure of seeing the child, in her muddy stockings and ruined shoes, received by her mother.

Lisa was devoured with anxiety. When she saw her little Pauline in this lamentable condition she was so overwhelmed that she did not think of punishing her. The old woman said in her sharp voice:

"It is that vile little Much. I bring her back to you, and you had best be very thankful. I found them under a tree on the Square."

Lisa could not speak. She did not know where to take hold of the child, whose skin was encrusted with dirt, as was everything she wore. But she was most exasperated by the sand in the apron pockets. She pointed to the door and said:

"Leave the room, you dirty little creature!"

Mademoiselle Saget was quite enlivened by this scene, and left the shop in radiant spirits. Her slender feet flew

over the pavement. At last she knew the truth, and Florent was in her power. She went to the fruit-market.

"Have you won a prize in a lottery?" said La Sarriette, gayly; "you seem to be very happy, judging by your smiles."

"Ah! my dear, if you only knew!"

La Sarriette was charming amid her fruits. Her sleeves were rolled above her elbows, and looked like peaches with the down upon them. She had hung cherries on her ears, with a recollection of what she had done as a child. She had been eating berries, and her mouth was stained with their juice.

Fruits were piled before her, while at the back of her stall lay melons and cantaloupes. Choice fruits were in baskets, and reminded one of children's glowing faces seen through curtains of leaves. Peaches were especially superb; apricots were amber-tinted; and cherries were full and ripe. Apples and pears were piled high, next transparent prunes; while strawberries exhaled their exquisite perfume—the wood strawberries particularly. Raspberries added another odor to these, while baskets of grapes, large, heavy clusters of grapes, hung over the side of the baskets, and let their seeds, browned and ripened by the warm kisses of the sun, fall slowly one by one. La Sarriette lived here as in an orchard, intoxicated by odors.

As the warm sun brought out the musky odors of the melons, La Sarriette would loosen her fichu, and let more of her satiny throat be seen.

Next her was an old woman who sold at her stall withered apples, pears which hung like pendulous breasts, and apricots that had a weird, sickly look, sulphur color specked with red. But La Sarriette's peaches were like her cheeks and the corners of her mouth; her cherries like her lips. She wanted to show Mademoiselle Saget some wonderful plums that had just come in, but the old woman said:

"No, I have no time now. I must see Madame Lecœur. I have strange things to tell her; come, if you choose."

La Sarriette could not resist the temptation. Monsieur Jules was sitting near by.

"Take care of my stall for a little while, will you?" she said. "I will be back presently." He called out after her as she turned the corner:

"No, Lisette, I am going away. I do not choose to wait an hour, as I did the other day. Your prunes give me the headache," and he walked off with his hands in his pocket, leaving the stall to take care of itself.

The two women were by this time out of sight and out of hearing. They were told that Madame Lecœur was in the cellar, and La Sarriette went down to find her, leaving her companion among the cheeses.

The cellar was very dark, for the gas-lights were few and far between, and burned but dimly in the bad air. Madame Lecœur was at work on her butter at one of the tables near the iron gratings on la Rue Berger, through which came a pale daylight. The tables were constantly

washed by floods from the faucets, and were as white as snow. Women were working over their butter. They took samples of different qualities, mixed them, corrected the flavor of one by adding more of another, just as is done with wines. They kneaded the mass before them with all their strength, and squeezed out every drop of buttermilk.

"Mademoiselle Saget wishes to see you, Aunt," said La Sarriette.

Madame Lecœur stopped, straightened her cap with her buttery fingers regardless of spots.

"I have nearly done," she answered. "Tell her to wait."

"She has something very interesting to tell you."

"One moment," was the reply. She had plunged in her arms again. The butter came up to her elbows—it had been previously softened in tepid water—and oiled her parchment-like skin, from which the purple veins started out like whip-cords.

La Sarriette was disgusted by these ugly arms at work in this yellow mass. But she remembered that she had worked there many a long afternoon, and that this had been her *pâte d'amande* which had preserved the beauty of her pretty little hands.

"I don't think your butter will be very good, Aunty. I can smell it here."

"To be sure you can," answered Madame Lecœur, briskly; "but it can't be helped. There are always people who are on the look out for a bargain."

La Sarriette thought she would not care to eat any of this butter. She looked into a little jar, which was full of a sort of red dye.

"Your rancourt is too light."

*Rancourt* is a preparation intended to give the butter a tempting hue. The butter-makers religiously preserve the secret of its manufacture. It is, in reality, composed of anotta seed, with an addition sometimes of carrots, and a decoction of marigold flowers.

"Come, do come," said the young woman, impatiently. "Mademoiselle Saget is in a hurry. She has heard something important about Uncle Gavard."

Madame Lecœur wiped her arms hastily, and followed her niece up the stairs, saying, anxiously:

"Do you think she can have gone?"

But she was comforted by seeing Mademoiselle Saget standing among the cheeses. The three women sat down close together. Mademoiselle Saget did not speak for two good minutes, and then she said, slowly:

"Do you wish to know where Florent comes from, and who he is?"

No one spoke.

"Very well. He comes from the galleys."

The smell of cheese filled the air—cheese from Brittany and from Normandy, done up in cloths. By the side of prints of butter was a Chester and a Gruyere: the first a bright gold color, and the latter looking like a gigantic wheel. Parmesan and Brie were on plates—a Roquefort near by. Tiny cheeses of goats' milk were not especially tempting.

"Yes," repeated the old maid; "he comes from the galleys! These Quenu-Gradelles need not be so fine."

But Madame Lecœur and La Sarriette uttered exclamations of astonishment. It was impossible. What had he done? Who would have imagined that Madame Quenu, proud as she was, would have chosen such a lover?

"You are all out," cried the old maid, impatiently. "Listen to me. I knew that I had seen the fellow somewhere."

She told them Florent's story. She recalled the vague reports which had once been current, of a nephew of old Gradelle's, having been sent to Cayenne for having killed a half-dozen soldiers at a barricade. She had seen him more than once herself, and this was the very man. She lamented that she was losing her memory. She wept over the loss like a student who sees the wind carry off the notes amassed in a lifetime of labor.

"Six soldiers!" murmured La Sarriette. "He must be as strong as a lion."

"And I dare say he has killed as many more since," added Mademoiselle Saget. "I should not like to meet him in the dark."

"But," said Madame Lecœur, "if he is big Lisa's brother-in-law, he is not her lover."

They all looked at each other, and then the old maid said, primly:

"I really don't see why not."

"Except," interposed La Sarriette, "that you say he is the lover of the two Mehudens."

"Certainly he is. But I don't care whose lover he is, after all; it is all one to me. But he is a rascal."

"Of course he is: a thorough rascal!" echoed the others.

They then began to depict all sorts of catastrophes, which would be likely to overtake the fair Lisa. This brother-in-law would certainly work her some evil, and then why was he at the Halles? He must be projecting some terrible plot. They decided that new locks should be placed on the poultry-cellars, while La Sarriette reminded her Aunt that only the week before, some one had stolen a basket of peaches. But Mademoiselle Saget informed them, loftily, that the "Reds" never did such things as that. They would not condescend to touch a basket of peaches, but they would pillage and burn.

Madame Lecœur turned pale. She saw the Halles in flames, and Florent and his associates bursting out on the devoted city.

"And he shares with Quenu old Gradelle's fortune," said Mademoiselle Saget. "I should not think they would like his appearing among them in this way."

She then went on to describe Lisa's finding this money, and told the precise sum, which neither Quenu nor his wife had confided to any one. It was clear that Florent had not received his portion, or he would be better dressed. The three women rolled this sweet morsel under their tongues, but finally decided it were best not to attack La belle Lisa, but turn their attention to Florent himself.

"I have seen Mademoiselle Léonce," said the old maid, with a significant glance.

The two others were very attentive. Madame Léonce was Gavard's concierge. He lived in an old house which was occupied in the lower story by an importer of lemons and oranges.

Madame Léonce kept house, and carried the keys, and made tisane for the old gentleman when he was ill. She was a cold, severe-looking woman, between fifty and sixty, speaking very slowly, and extremely aggrieved because Gavard had kissed her on one occasion. Mademoiselle Saget took coffee with her every Wednesday evening, and the two talked incessantly of the worthy poultry-merchant. They were both very fond of him, and wished him to be happy.

"Yes, I saw Madame Léonce," repeated the old maid. "I saw her last evening. She was in great trouble. It seems that Monsieur Gavard never goes home until after one o'clock—she had some hot soup ready for him Sunday night."

"She knows what she is about!" said Madame Lecœur, bitterly.

Mademoiselle Saget thought she ought to protect her friend.

"Not at all. You are quite mistaken. Madame Léonce is above her position. Had she chosen to feather her nest there, she could have done so long ago. He trusts everything to her, and that is why I wish to speak to you, but you must remember that I speak in confidence."

They swore never to open their lips, and she continued:

"Monsieur Gavard has bought a pistol, and keeps it on a table at the side of his bed—and this is not all. His—"

"His money?" gasped Madame Lecœur.

"—Is all in his wardrobe. He has sold out all his securities and keeps gold on hand."

"Gold?" interrupted La Sarriette.

"Yes, a great pile of gold. Madame Léonce told me that he opened the wardrobe one day in her presence, and that it hurt her eyes, it was so bright."

The eyes of the three women were distended as if they saw the gold before them.

"I wish my uncle would give it to me—all this beautiful gold," said La Sarriette, gayly. "Jules and I would have a very good time."

Madame Lecœur had little to say. The thought of this gold crushed her to the earth.

"If I were you," said Mademoiselle Saget, addressing her, "I should watch over my own interests. This pistol shows that Monsieur Gavard has bad advisers."

They all three fell once more on Florent. They pulled him deliberately to pieces. They swore never to open their mouths, not out of regard to Florent, but to that worthy Monsieur Gavard.

As they were about to separate, the butter-merchant said:

"Do you think we can trust Madame Léonce?"

"You ask me too much," answered the old woman. "I think her a very honest woman, but I by no means answer for her; you must judge for yourselves."

The smell of the cheeses grew stronger and stronger, and yet it seemed as if the stench from the words uttered

by the venomous tongues of these women was worse than all.

"I thank you sincerely," said the market-woman, "and if I am ever rich I will show my gratitude with more than words."

But Mademoiselle Saget still lingered. She took up a tiny cheese, turned it over, and laid it down again. Then she asked the price.

"For me?" she added, in an insinuating tone.

"To you, nothing," answered Madame Lecœur. "I give it to you," and she added, with a sigh: "If I were only rich!"

The cheese quickly disappeared in the basket; the butter-merchant went down to the cellar, and the old woman walked on with La Sarriette to her stall.

"It smells nicer here than at your Aunt's place," said Mademoiselle Saget. "I really felt sick there. But here everything is as sweet as yourself, my beauty!"

La Sarriette laughed. She liked compliments, and said, as she sold some plums to a lady, that they were like sugar.

"I should like to buy some, too," said the old maid, when the lady had gone, "only I want so few. You see, one lone woman—"

"Take a handful," cried the pretty brunette. "It won't ruin me! Send Jules here, will you, if you see him. He is probably smoking his cigar on the first bench to the right as you go out."

Mademoiselle Saget lengthened her fingers to take up a

handful of plums, which she popped into her basket with the little cheese. She pretended that she was about to leave the Halles, but she lingered still, not being quite content with her dinner of cheese and plums. She returned to the butter-market, behind which were the stalls of cooked meats. Each morning small, close wagons, like boxes of zinc, with trays and perforated sides, stopped at the doors of the restaurants, and at the ministers' and ambassadors', where the cooks sold the débris from the kitchen. All this was sorted in the cellars at the market, and as early as nine o'clock, the plates were displayed at three and five sous—bits of meat, a wing of a bird, heads or tails of fish, vegetables, and ham. Other plates were devoted to the desserts—cakes a trifle broken, and bon-bons, which were almost whole.

Hungry-looking women, clerks and boys stood at these stalls, among which Mademoiselle Saget quietly slipped. She especially affected one woman, who pretended that all she sold came from the Tuileries, which was some consolation to the pride of the little old woman, as she ate her slice of cold mutton.

Next to her, on this occasion, stood a tall old man, who was buying a plate of fish and meat mixed. Mademoiselle Saget had her eyes on some fried white-bait, for three sous. She bargained the woman down, and, getting it for two sous, put it into her basket.

The first movement of each purchaser at these stalls was to smell of the dishes. The odor about the place was not inviting, as it suggested dirty dish-water and grease.

"Come and see me to-morrow," said the woman. "There is to be a great dinner at the Tuileries to-night, and I will put aside something nice for you."

Mademoiselle Saget promised to come, and as she turned away, she saw Gavard, who had heard. She turned very red, but pretended not to see him, as she drew her shawl close about her thin shoulders, and went away. He followed her a short distance, saying to himself that "the wickedness of this magpie did not astonish him, if she ate the things which were cooked at the Tuileries."

The next day a vague rumor began to circulate in the Halles. Mademoiselle Saget showed her own peculiar skill. She allowed Mademoiselle Lecœur and La Sarriette to say what they pleased, while she held her tongue. The stories they set in circulation were most extraordinary, beginning at first with a few words, expanding later, until Florent had killed ten gendarmes at the barricades. He had returned to France on a piratical craft, and ever since his arrival had been busy with new plots. When the imagination of these women was let loose, they soon organized a band of smugglers and thieves, who devastated Paris in the most systematic manner. They had a great deal to say about the inheritance which the Quenu-Gradelles had appropriated. The general opinion was, that Florent had returned to obtain his rights, and that he was only awaiting a good opportunity to pocket the whole. Some day the Quenu-Gradelles would be found dead in their beds, for there were terrible quarrels every day there now.

When these stories reached La belle Normande she shrugged her shoulders, and laughed.

"You are ridiculous," she said. "The dear man is as gentle as a lamb!"

She had just refused to marry Monsieur Lebigre, who had offered himself in due form, after innumerable little attentions. Every Sunday for two months he sent a bottle of liqueur to the Mehudens. It was Rose who brought it with her submissive air, and delivered it to La Normande with a complimentary message, which she repeated accurately, apparently without being in the least annoyed by this strange commission. When Monsieur Lebigre was dismissed, he sent Rose the next Sunday with two bottles of champagne and a huge bouquet, which seemed to indicate that he had not lost all hope.

Rose walked up to the pretty fish-woman, and recited, without a pause, this madrigal from the wine-merchant:

"Monsieur Lebigre begs you to drink this to his health, which has been much shaken by what you know of. He hopes that you will be kind enough to cure him some day by being as beautiful and sweet as these bowers."

La Normande was much amused. She asked many questions of the woman about her master. She asked if he wore suspenders, and if he snored at night, and then told her to take away the champagne and the bouquet.

"Tell your master he must send me nothing more. You are a very obliging little woman. I am sure—"

"He told me to come," answered Rose, plaintively, "and I think you are doing very wrong, to treat him so cruelly! He is a very handsome man."

La Normande was entirely carried away by Florent's quiet consistency of character. She sat and listened to the instruction he gave to Much night after night, and made up her mind that she would marry this man, who was so kind to her boy; she would keep her stall in the market, and he would be promoted to some higher position. But this dream received no encouragement from anything in the manner of the Professor toward her. He kept her at a distance when she was quite ready to fall into his arms. Florent might, perhaps, have yielded to her charms, but for his attachment to little Much. The idea, too, of a mistress in the same house with her mother and sister, revolted him.

La Normande learned the history of the man she loved with no small surprise, for never had he made the smallest allusion to it. She insisted on his talking to her now, and asked if he did not fear that the police would find him. He reassured her, saying that it was too old a story, and that they would not trouble themselves. One evening he told her about the woman on the boulevard Montmartre, the lady in the rose-colored bonnet, and of the breast, pierced through all the soft muslins and laces, whose blood had drenched his hands. The thought of her had haunted him all these years. She had gone with him to Guiana, and he had come back to France, with the bewildered idea that he should find her still lying on the sidewalk. Never to this day did he see a rose-colored bonnet and a shawl falling from the shoulders, without a sick feeling at his heart. When he closed his eyes he could see her coming

toward him with her sad, affrighted eyes and white lips. He had never heard her name, and yet she was his model of all that was pure and good. It seemed to him that had he met her a few moments earlier she would have gladdened his whole life. No, he would have no other wife. He would never marry.

He did not say this, but his voice shook, the feminine instinct of La Normande grasped his meaning, and she became wildly jealous of the dead woman.

"It was a great pity you saw her," she said, maliciously, "because she could not have been very beautiful by that time."

Florent turned pale. He never forgave La belle Normande for this brutality, which forever more, compelled him to associate the idea of a charnel house, with that pale face framed in rose-colored silk.

By this time La belle Normande began to see, that she was mistaken in thinking she had stolen a lover from Lisa. This diminished her triumph so much, that her love for Florent lessened considerably in the next week. But she was comforted by hearing about the fortune which La belle Lisa was keeping from her brother-in-law.

When Florent next came, as he sat writing copies, she said to him:

"What a strange idea that was of your Uncle's to put his money in a salting barrel! Eighty-five thousand francs is a very nice sum, but I dare say the Quenus lied and there was twice as much. If I were you I would insist on my share and at once."

"I don't want it," answered Florent. "I have no use for it."

This was too much for her. She burst forth:

"Don't you understand that these people are cheating you? Lisa passes over to you her husband's old linen and old clothes. I do not say this to wound you, but every one sees it. You are wearing pantaloons that we have all seen on your brother for the last three years. I should throw these old rags in their faces and ask for my money. Forty-two thousand francs, is it not? Very well, then; I would not go out of the shop until I had them."

In vain did Florent explain that his sister-in-law had offered him his share, and that he could have it whenever he pleased. He entered into a lengthy explanation in order to convince her of Quenu's honesty.

"I know all about their honesty," she exclaimed. "Fat Lisa folds it up, and packs it away in her wardrobe so that she may not wear it out. But, my poor friend! you see no further than a child of five years old. She could pay you your money with one hand, and take it away with the other. I say you ought to insist on your rights. I wish you would let me go and have it out with them."

"No, no!" exclaimed Florent, quite horrified. "I will see about it myself soon."

She doubted the truth of what he said, and told him that he was altogether too gentle. She determined to keep him up to the mark, and when she was his wife she would soon settle with Lisa. She lay in her bed at night building all sorts of plans. She saw herself going into the shop

and making a terrible scene just when it was crowded. She found such infinite delight in this project that she would have married Florent, if for no other reason than to claim this money.

Old Mother Mehuden, who was utterly exasperated at Monsieur Lebigre's dismissal, called her daughter an idiot, and declared that "the Skeleton," the graceful name she gave to Florent, had bewitched her by some nasty drug. When she heard the story of Cayenne, she was absolutely horrible in her rage, at the same time declaring that it was no more than she expected. She called him all sorts of names, and locked up all her drawers as soon as he entered the room, in the most ostentatious way.

One day she had a terrible quarrel with her eldest daughter, and ended by saying:

"Look out! Do not go too far, or I will certainly go to the Prefect and denounce this man."

"You will denounce him!" repeated La Normande, trembling all over with terror and indignation. "Do not think of such a thing. If you were not my mother—"

Claire, who was present, began to laugh nervously. For some time she had been very quiet and gloomy, moving about as if in a dream, with reddened eyes and a pale face.

"If she were not your mother," interrupted Claire, "you would beat her, I suppose you mean. Very well, beat me then, as I am only your sister, for I intend to save my mother the trouble, by going myself to the Prefect."

And as La Normande fairly choked, she added, in a strange tone:

"And when I have done it, I will throw myself into the Seine on my way home!"

Tears streamed from her eyes, and she rushed from the room. They heard her close her own door violently. Mother Mehuden said no more about denouncing Florent.

The rivalry between La belle Normande and La belle Lisa assumed a more formidable character. In the afternoon, when the awning of gray striped with pink was dropped, the fish-woman said aloud, with a sneer, that she was hiding herself. The shade in the window also exasperated her. It represented a glade in a forest, where gentlemen in black coats, and ladies in full ball costume were eating a red pâté as big as themselves. La belle Lisa was not afraid, however, and as soon as the sun was gone, the shade was drawn up, and she was seen at her counter, knitting and calmly contemplating the Square—crowded with vagabonds lying under the trees, and porters smoking their pipes sat on the benches. At the ends of the sidewalk, two advertising columns were filled with gay-colored theatrical advertisements. She glanced from time to time at La belle Normande, while pretending to follow the carriages. Sometimes she leaned a little forward to look at the omnibus, running from the Bastile to la Place Wagram, but it was merely to see the fish-woman more distinctly. La belle Normande was now avenging herself for the dropped shade, by putting over her head and on her wares large sheets of brown paper, on the

pretext of protecting herself from the setting sun. But La belle Lisa triumphed inasmuch as La Normande's great ambition was to do things in good style, and nothing humiliated her more than to hear "the good manners" of her rival praised.

Mother Mehuden had detected this weakness in her daughter, and attacked her there.

"I saw Madame Quenu at her door to-night," she would say. "It is amazing how that woman is preserved. She is always so well dressed, with the air of a lady. It is the counter, after all. Nothing shows off a woman like that."

This was a direct allusion to Monsieur Lebigre's proposition. La belle Normande did not answer for a moment. She was thinking of herself on the other corner of la Rue Pirouette—a pendant to La belle Lisa, at the wine merchant's counter. Her affection for Florent received a severe shock. Florent was very difficult to defend just now, for the whole Quartier had turned upon him. Each individual behaved as if he had a personal interest in exterminating him. One declared that Florent had been seen, trying to set a fire in the cellars under the markets, and this foolish tale was only one among many. The fish-market was the last to yield to this infection. There Florent was liked by the fish-women. They stood up for him for some time, but constantly influenced by the butter and cheese-women, they yielded at last. Then recommenced the old struggle of the Fat against the Lean. Mademoiselle Saget's black hat was to be seen at all hours

and in all places. Her small, pale face seemed to multiply. She had sworn to avenge herself on the society which assembled nightly in the private room at the Cabaret. She accused these gentlemen of laughing at her for buying broken victuals. The truth was that Gavard one evening had incidentally mentioned that "the dried-up old maid, who was always spying about, eat the trash that the Bonapartists threw away."

These slices of meat, gathered up from the Emperor's kitchen, were to him the personification of all the disorder and corruption of the Government, and from this time it was a great joke at the Cabaret to talk of taking Mademoiselle Saget up by the tongs. She was regarded as some vile beast, who ate the stuff that a properly educated dog would have rejected.

Clémence and Gavard repeated this very poor joke in the market, so that the little old maid was seriously injured by it. When she hung around a stall, with the expectation of some little gift, she would be told, with a coarse laugh, to go to the Tuileries' woman, and buy a plate of broken victuals. She fairly wept with mortification, and said to La Sarriette, and to Madame Lecœur, that she would certainly have her revenge on Gavard.

They made no reply, hoping that she would soon calm down.

Gavard, however, was really compromising himself. Ever since the conspiracy was well started, he had carried his revolver in his pocket—a revolver which he had purchased at the best place in Paris, with many precautions

and a great air of mystery. The next day he showed it to half the women in the poultry-market, binding them to secrecy. This pistol gave him great importance in their eyes, and placed him definitively in the category of dangerous men. He would sometimes pull it out, and show the shining trigger to several women at his stall, begging them all to stand before him, that he might not be seen by other people. Then he would take aim at a goose or a turkey, suspended from above, and was delighted at the terror of the women, whom he would soothe by telling that it was not loaded. Then he would pull out a box of cartridges and display those. After they had been sufficiently admired, he would put away his armory, and with folded arms orate for an hour.

"A man with that thing," he would say, loftily, "is twice a man. Sundays I go with a friend to the Plaine Saint-Denis—of course, you understand that I would not tell everybody that I took this with me. We take aim at a tree, and, bless your little hearts! I hit it each time I fire. One of these days you will hear strange stories about Anatole."

It was his revolver which he called Anatole. At the end of a week, every one in the market knew the pistol, and the cartridges. He was too rich and too stout to be included in the distrust and hatred they felt for Florent, but the esteem with which he was formerly regarded, was greatly lessened, and timid persons became afraid of him.

"It is very imprudent to carry arms about one," said Mademoiselle Saget, sententiously. "Some accident will certainly happen!"

Ever since Florent had given up taking his meals at his brother's he almost lived at the Cabaret, and the private room was regarded much as if it were his own. An old desk was given up to him, in which he kept his books and papers. Monsieur Lebigre even kindly added a table, on which he said Florent could sleep if it were necessary.

He showed, in fact, so much kind cordiality, that Florent was quite touched. Logre was very kind, also; and it was to him that Florent confided every detail of the plot as it gradually ripened, and of which Florent continued to be the head. He was at this time perfectly happy; he no longer walked on common earth; he moved as if on air. He had the credulity of a child, and the confidence of a hero. His enthusiasm became intense, and he spoke of the coming struggle as of a great fête, to which all brave men would be bidden. While he talked Gavard played with his pistol, and Charvet grew more and more bitter, as he was by no means pleased with the prominent position assumed by his rival. He was gradually becoming disgusted with politics, and one evening coming into the Cabaret rather earlier than usual he found only Monsieur Logre and Lebigre there. He opened his heart to them.

"He is a fellow," he said, "who literally has no notion whatever of politics. He would have done very well as a professor of writing in a young ladies' boarding-school. It would be a misfortune to us, rather than a blessing, if he should succeed, for everything would be turned upside down. These humanitarians and half-way poets do not amount to much, except in the way of talk. He will not

succeed—but he will get himself locked up—as you will see."

His two listeners did not reply: they wished him to continue.

"He would have been arrested long ago," resumed Charvet, "if he were half as dangerous as he would have us believe. The police knew he was here, the very first day he set foot in Paris. If they did not interfere with him, it was simply because he was too insignificant to give them any anxiety."

Logre started.

"Now," resumed Charvet, "it is different with me. For fifteen years I have had half a dozen spies at my heels, who will have me arrested whenever the Prefect has need of me."

"Yes, certainly," answered Lebigre, mechanically. He rarely spoke, and was now paler than usual, as he glanced stealthily at Logre.

"If you take my advice," added Charvet, "you will put an end to this sort of thing going on here, or your establishment will be so compromised that it will be closed by the government."

Logre smiled. This was not the first time that Charvet had talked in this way. He wished to frighten them, and induce them to break with Florent, through their fears. But he found them always undisturbed by anything he could say.

He was no less regular in his appearance at the Cabaret, after this explosion. Clémence was always with him. She had lost her clerkship at the market.

"This Monsieur Manory and I have not the same political opinions," said the brunette, as she carelessly twisted a cigarette. "That is all there is to be said about it. Manory is ready to lick the emperor's boots." The truth was that she had amused herself one morning in placing against the long list of sales a series of caricatures, and the names of ladies and gentlemen best known at court. Manory had nearly died of horror. Gavard laughed whenever he thought of it.

"You ought to have been a man," he said, slapping her shoulder.

Clémence had adopted a new way of making her grog. She first filled the glass with boiling water, which she sweetened, and then poured the rum drop by drop on the slice of lemon floating on the top. She then lighted this rum, and watched it burn, the flames of the alcohol imparting a green tinge to her face. But after she lost her position at market, she could not indulge in this extravagance. She lived on the proceeds of some lessons that she gave in la Rue Merosmesnil.

The evenings in the little room were less noisy than they had been. Charvet rarely spoke, but glared in silence at his rival. The remembrance that he had reigned there, before the other's arrival, gnawed his heart. He continued to haunt the place because he was homesick elsewhere. He recalled the days, when he had compelled these men to think on all precisely as he bade them. The thing that enraged him was that he had been dispossessed so gradually that he had not seen it himself. He did not

explain this by admitting Florent's superiority. He would simply say with uplifted brows:

"The fellow talks like a curé," while the others drank in his words. Charvet pretended not to be able to find a nail on which to hang his hat, so crowded was the small room with Florent's clothing. He even made a formal complaint to the proprietor, and asked if the room was the exclusive property of any single member of the society.

This invasion of his rights was the coup de grace. Men were brutes, and he despised all humanity, as he noticed the way in which Logre and Lebigre hung on Florent's words. He was exasperated by Gavard's revolver, and thought Robine, who never spoke, the most sensible man of the lot, while Lacaille and Alexandre only confirmed him in the idea that the people were stupid, and that they needed a revolutionary dictatorship for at least ten years before they could govern themselves.

Logre declared about this time that the organization of the sections was nearly completed, and Florent began to distribute the rôles.

After an animated discussion one night, where he felt himself to be in the background, Charvet rose and took his hat, saying:

"Good-night. Amuse yourselves by all means; but I don't propose to work to gratify the ambition of any man."

Clémence wrapped her shawl about her, and added, coldly:

"The plan is simply impracticable."

And as Robine looked after them, Charvet stopped and asked if he would not go with him. But Robine, having his glass half full of beer, contented himself with shaking hands with the pair, who never came again. Lacaille said some days after this, that he had seen them from the street in a brewery in La Rue Serpente, gesticulating and talking earnestly.

Florent could never indoctrinate Claude, though he took him more than once to Lebigre's, where the artist spent his whole evening in drawing caricatures. He said to Florent as they walked home together:

"The truth is, my dear fellow, I am not in the least interested in politics; but I want to go there again with you, to make two or three sketches, to add to those I drew while you were discussing. By the way, what were you discussing? The question of the two chambers, was it not? I could paint a picture from these sketches, my boy, which would be the success of the Salon."

Florent was indignant at this indifference, and reproached the painter with his lack of patriotism. Claude shook his head.

"You are right very likely. I do not say that you are not. I cannot even answer you, you see! I only know that France does not need me, and that— Will you allow me to be frank? Well, then, the reason I like you is, because you seem to me to be dabbling in politics as I dabble in Art. It is only dabbling, my dear fellow."

Florent protested.

"You are an artist in your own way. You only dream

politics, and I am willing to wager that you spend half your time up here, gazing at the stars, counting them as the votes of the world you can't see. You are more of a poet than a politician, and that is the truth." He then went on to say that he was tired of politics, because he had heard so much of them in the various wine-shops and cafés, particularly of one in the house occupied by La Sarriette, which was the favorite place of the youth of the Halles. There Monsieur Jules reigned triumphant. He read the journals, and knew all that was going on at the theatres. He adored politics; his ideal was "Morny," whom he called thus abruptly. He read the reports of the *Corps Legislatif*, and laughed vociferously at every word uttered by Morny, and he went on to say that the lower classes detested the Emperor, merely because the Emperor wished nice people to be happy.

"I have been to this café often," said Claude, "and they are funny enough when they, with pipes in their mouths, talk of the balls at Court, exactly as if they had been invited."

"You live in a nice set of people, certainly," said Florent, smiling.

The Painter raised his eyebrows.

"You need not be troubled; they do me no harm. I like to see these women of the people in this way. I don't want a wife, though; one would be sorely in my way. Good-night, and sleep well. When you are Minister, I will give you my ideas for the embellishment of Paris."

Florent was obliged to relinquish all hope of a convert

here. This he regretted, for in spite of his fanatical blindness and devotion to his theories, he had begun to realize the hostility around him, which seemed to increase hourly.

Even at the Mehudens', his welcome was less cordial. The old woman laughed at him covertly, Much did not obey him, and La Normande was out of patience with him, for she had, as yet, found no way of arousing him from his coldness. She had said to him more than once, that he behaved as if he were disgusted with her, and she would push back her chair, and go to the other end of the table.

Auguste's friendship had likewise vanished. He no longer came to his room when he went up-stairs at night. He was really terrified by the reports he heard of this strange man, with whom he had been shut up for hours at a time. Augustine implored him never to be guilty of a like imprudence. Lisa vexed them, moreover, by telling them that they could not be married as long as Florent remained there, as she had no other room to offer them.

Auguste at once determined that "the convict" must be gotten rid of, and at each noise he heard in the night, he hugged himself with joy, thinking that the police had come at last to arrest Florent.

Below-stairs, at the Quenu-Gradelles', this subject was never touched upon. Quenu was a little saddened by the coolness between his wife and his brother, but he consoled himself by paying more attention to the salting of his lard, and to the seasoning of his sausages. He sunned himself occasionally on his threshold, without the smallest idea of the gossip his appearance aroused. He was much pitied,

some of the neighbors declaring that he had grown thin, though in truth he had never been so stout in his life, while others said that he ought to be ashamed to look so well when his brother was such a disgrace to him.

Quenu, they said, like most deceived husbands, was the last to know the truth, and was as cheerful as usual, when he chatted with some neighbor on the sidewalk. The neighbor, however, presented as melancholy and sympathetic a countenance as if all the pigs in France had been suddenly afflicted with the jaundice.

"What on earth is the matter?" he said one day to Lisa. "These people all look at me as if they were about to bury me. Do I look ill?"

She reassured him, telling him that he looked as fresh as a rose, for he was terribly afraid of illness, sighing and groaning if he suffered from the smallest indisposition.

But the truth was, the Charcuterie had lost its gayety to a very great extent. Claude came in one day, and said to his aunt that it looked far less cheerful than it did. The customers all asked for their half-pound of lard, or ten cents' worth of pork, with lowered voices, as if in a sick-room.

Lisa was as dignified as ever. Her long white aprons were more glossy and stiffer than of yore; her handsome well-kept hands were surmounted by deeper linen cuffs, and her face, with its sad, subdued expression, seemed to say that she was enduring the most unmerited suffering.

Marjolin had left the hospital, as well physically, as ever, but he had become nearly an idiot. His fall had affected

his brain, and left him an absolute brute. He was like a child of five years of age, who had attained a gigantic growth. He laughed, found it difficult to pronounce certain words, and obeyed Cadine implicitly, except on the one point of not going to the Charcuterie. Just as soon as Cadine started off with her wicker tray to sell her violets, he went to the sidewalk in front of the Charcuterie.

"Come in!" Lisa would say.

She often gave him pickled cucumbers, which he adored. The sight of La belle Lisa pleased him extremely.

At first she was afraid that he remembered. She asked him if his head ever hurt him. He said:

"No, indeed!" rocking to and fro, in a childish way.

"Did you fall?" she asked.

"Yes. I fell—fell—fell," he sang, in a tone of great delight.

This touched Lisa. She urged Gavard to keep him; and after this interview she was not afraid to caress him, by taking him by the chin and calling him a good boy. The colossus shut his eyes, with all the enjoyment of an animal, and La belle Lisa felt that she owed him this happiness as a small compensation for the blow with which she had felled him like an ox, in the cellar under the market.

In the meantime, the shop grew duller and more sombre. Florent dined there sometimes on Sundays, when Quenu would make frantic efforts at gayety.

One night, after one of these uncomfortable entertainments, he said to Lisa:

"What can the matter be? I am not ill, and yet I have a weight on my heart. I am unhappy, but I cannot tell why. Our business is prosperous, and everything is going smoothly. You too, ma belle," he continued, "are not right, either in health or spirits; and I think I shall send for a physician."

His wife looked at him gravely.

"There is no need of medicine," she said; "for there seems to be trouble everywhere just now."

Then, yielding to a sudden impulse, she said, in a tender voice:

"Take care of yourself, dear; for you must not be ill—that would be my crowning affliction."

She kept him as much in the kitchen as possible, knowing that the noise of the chopping and the frying pleased him, and she could in that way keep him away from Mademoiselle Saget, who now passed much of her time in the shop. The old woman was doing her best to push Lisa to extremities.

"There are wicked people," she said, "wicked people indeed! people who had best mind their own business. If you knew what they said, Madame Quenu—but no, I would never dare tell you."

Lisa said that it was of no consequence, that she did not care in the least; and the other whispered over the counter:

"They actually say that Monsieur Florent is not your cousin."

And by degrees she let Lisa see that she knew all.

This was one way of holding Madame Quenu at her mercy.

And when Lisa confessed the truth—feeling it to be the wisest policy to hold under her hand, a person who was thoroughly *au courant* with all the gossip of the Quartier, the old maid swore she would be as dumb as a fish; and that she would give the denial to all she heard. Then, in fact, she enjoyed the drama. She appeared each day with new reports:

"You should take precautions," she said. "I heard two women, at the tripe store, talking. I could not tell, of course, that they lied: they would have thought me crazy."

A few days later she came in, looking as if she were frightened out of her senses, and waited until two or three persons who were in the shop had left it; and then, in a whisper, she said:

"I want to tell you that all the men who meet at the Cabaret have guns, and they intend to do what was done in '48. Is it not sad to see Monsieur Gavard, rich as he is, mixed up with all these scamps? I wanted to tell you on account of your brother-in-law."

"But there is no truth in it, I know."

"No truth in it? Go out any evening, and pass la Rue Pirouette and hear the noise they make. You remember how they did their best to lead your husband away. Is not that true? And is it not true that I have seen them, with my own eyes, making cartridges?"

"Yes, certainly; and I thank you; only so many things are invented now-a-days."

"But this is not an invention, unfortunately. And everybody says, that if the police could get hold of it there will be many persons compromised. Now, Monsieur Gavard—"

But Lisa shook her head, as if to say that Monsieur Gavard was an old idiot, and she did not care what became of him.

"I speak of Monsieur Gavard as I would speak of others—of your brother-in-law, for example," answered the old woman, slyly. "It seems that he is the chief of the whole movement. I am very sorry for you; for if the police should come here, they might also take Monsieur Quenu. Two brothers, you know, are like two fingers on the same hand."

La belle Lisa turned very pale, for Mademoiselle Saget had touched the open wound of her anxieties, and from this time brought a varied collection of anecdotes every evening of innocent persons, who were thrown into prison for having sheltered rascals, and in the evening regularly called at the Cabaret, with the hope of gaining some information from Rose, and all the time keeping her eyes and ears open. She had noticed the tenderness shown by Monsieur Lebigre toward Florent, and his anxiety to keep him there, although the small purchases he made could have been no advantage to the house.

"One would think," she said to herself, shrewdly, "that he expected to sell him; but to whom, I wonder?"

Nor was she ignorant of the position of the two men toward La belle Normande, and this naturally added to her

surprise. One evening, when she was standing at the counter of the Cabaret, she heard Logre throw himself down in a chair in the inner room, and complain of his fatigue, saying that he had taken an enormous walk in the Faubourgs. She looked down at his feet, and saw not one grain of dust. She smiled faintly, paid for her liqueur, and departed.

She took up a position there at her own window, to complete her observations. This window was very high, and overlooked so many of the neighboring houses that it was to her the source of infinite joy. She regarded it as her observatory. Every article in the rooms opposite she could have enumerated. She knew at what hour the people rose, and what they had for breakfast, and even the persons who came to see them. She could see the Halles, and not a woman of the Quartier could pass down la Rue Rambuteau without her knowledge; she could say, moreover, where they were going, and what they carried in their baskets. She knew how they passed each hour of the day, the number of their children, the amount of money they made weekly, and the quality of their dresses hanging in their wardrobes.

That was Madame Loret, who was killing herself to educate her son, and this one was Madame Hutin, a poor little woman, whose husband neglected her; and there went Mademoiselle Cécile, the butcher's daughter, whose temper was so bad that she would never be married. And the old maid could have gone on for an indefinite length of time, amusing herself in this way, but after eight o'clock

she had eyes only for the windows of the Cabaret, on which she could see the shadows of the conspirators. She divined the secession of Charvet and Clémence from the fact of not seeing their profiles. In this way she was able to follow each step of the conspiracy, so acute did she become in reading the meaning of each gesture. One night she saw Gavard's pistols, the arms of which she had spoken to Madame Quenu. Another night she was puzzled at certain movements—and decided they were manufacturing the wadding for their guns.

The next morning she went to the Cabaret, at an early hour, and out of the corner of her eye, saw a pile of linen with red stains lying on the table in the private room. This was truly frightful.

She hurried to call on Lisa.

"Oh, dear Madame Quenu," she said. "I would not frighten you, but I am really terrified, and you must swear not to repeat what I say to you, for those men would certainly kill me if they knew."

She then went on to speak of the red linen.

"I don't know what it meant, but I could swear it was blood. Something has happened."

Lisa did not reply. She played with a fork she held in her hand.

Mademoiselle Saget added, softly:

"If I were you, I would certainly find out. Why don't you go and look in your brother-in-law's room?"

Lisa started. The fork fell from her hand. She looked the old woman full in the face. Mademoiselle Saget continued:

"You have a right to do it. Your brother-in-law will certainly get you into trouble. Now yesterday, at Madame Taboureau's, they were talking about you. She is a great friend of yours, you know, and she said that you were altogether too kind to this Monsieur Florent, and that she would have got rid of him long ago."

"Madame Taboureau said that?"

"Yes, certainly, and you know she is a woman who means what she says."

Lisa looked with unseeing eyes from the window. A frown brought her eyebrows closer together. She was thinking. In the meantime the little old maid had her nose among the dishes on the counter. She seemed to be talking to herself.

"Bless me! here is a cut sausage. What a pity for it to dry up! And this pudding has burst. It must have been pricked by a fork. It ought to be taken away, certainly."

Lisa mechanically took up the pudding and the sausage, put them in paper, saying:

"They are yours if you will have them."

In a moment they disappeared into the basket, which never left the woman's arm, who was now so accustomed to receiving presents that she forgot to say, "Thank you," and hurried away to find her dessert.

When she was alone, Lisa sat down to think. For a week she had been in a state of constant anxiety. One evening Florent had told Quenu that he wanted five hundred francs. He said it easily and naturally. Quenu told

him to go to Lisa for the money. This was especially disagreeable to Florent, whose application was received by his sister-in-law with compressed lips. Three days later he asked for a thousand more.

"You see I was right," said Lisa, sarcastically, as she was undressing. "Your brother is not as disinterested as you thought. I must make an entry of this last thousand francs."

She seated herself at the Secretary, and opened an account book.

"I did well to leave a large space," she murmured. "He intends to take it all by bits, I see."

Quenu did not speak; he was very much out of temper. Each time his wife opened the Secretary, the creak of that falling leaf was like a despairing cry in his ears. He intended to remonstrate with his brother, and prevent him from throwing all his money away on the Mehudens, but each time he opened his lips his courage failed him.

Florent in two days had taken fifteen hundred francs. Logre had said that if they had money, things would get on much faster, and the next day was overjoyed to find that these words carelessly thrown in the air, came down transformed into shining gold pieces, which he quickly pocketed.

After this his demands were incessant. One section wished to have a place where they could meet in safety; another was compelled to support destitute patriots, and there were always purchases of arms to be made.

Florent was ready to give all he had, and was only

restrained by Lisa's disagreeable manner whenever he asked for money, for he felt that the cause was holy. Logre was in the best of spirits, and wore rose-colored cravats and patent-leather boots, the sight of which seemed to have a bad effect on Lacaille's spirits.

"Three thousand francs in one week!" said Lisa to Quenu. "What have you to say to that? If he goes on in this way he won't have a sou at the end of four months—and poor old Gradelle! who worked forty years for this money!"

"It is all your own fault!" exclaimed Quenu. "Why did you tell him anything about the fortune?"

She looked at him gravely.

"It is his own," she answered. "He has a perfect right to all he asks for. I am ready to give him the money. I am only disturbed by the bad use he makes of it, and I feel that something must be done."

"Do what you please!" muttered Quenu, tortured by avarice. "I won't interfere with you."

He loved his brother still, but the thought of fifty thousand francs melting away in four months disturbed him greatly. Lisa, assisted by Mademoiselle Saget, had a very clear idea of its destination, and even went so far as to tell the little old maid how much Florent had drawn, wishing the truth to be circulated in the Quartier. This occurred the day before the story of the blood-stained linen was brought to her, and which decided her. She looked around the shop, which seemed to her very dreary; even Monton, the cat, had a discontented air. She hastily

summoned Augustine to take her place, and went up to Florent's room.

She started when she opened the door. The purity of the white bed was stained by a pile of red sashes which streamed down upon the coverlid. On the mantelpiece were cockades and epaulettes—scarlet and gold. Flags of all colors were hung against the wall. Thanks to her investigations of her brother-in-law's private papers, she knew that these were the colors of the different sections.

The photographs of Auguste and Augustine looked pale with fright, amid all these Revolutionary insignia. Lisa looked at everything, but touched nothing, holding herself aloof as if they were red hot and would burn her. It was thus, then, that the money, so hardly and so honestly earned, was spent.

She stood looking out. The glowing flowers on the balcony were to her only other cockades, and the bird's song sounded in her ears like the echo of musketry.

Then, as the idea came to her, that the insurrection would burst out to-morrow, she heard the roll of drums and the clear notes of the bugle.

She hurried down-stairs, without a glance at the papers on the table; but she went no further than her own room, which she entered.

At this solemn crisis, Lisa deliberately dressed her hair, with all her usual care. Her hands did not tremble, and her eyes were fixed.

As she buttoned the waist of her black silk dress, using all the strength in her wrists to bring it together, she remembered what the Abbe Roustan had said.

She asked herself the question, and decided that she was only doing her duty. And, as she pinned her shawl, she felt that she was a thoroughly honest woman. She put a thick veil over her hat, and drew on dark gloves.

Before going out, she locked her Secretary, as if to impart to it a comfortable sense of security that it would not soon be again disturbed.

Quenu was standing at the shop-door in his white apron. He was quite surprised to see her go out in this grande toilette at ten o'clock in the morning.

"Where on earth are you going?" he asked.

She invented some story about a shopping-day with Madame Taboureau. She added, that as she should pass the Gaieté, she would take seats for the evening. Quenu ran after her, and told her to be sure and take them in the centre of the house. She smilingly assented, and went on to the cab-stand, where she took a fiacre, telling the coachman to drive to the Gaieté—she feared being followed. When she had her tickets, she went to the Palais de Justice, where she dismissed the carriage, and went slowly through the halls and corridors.

As she was lost amid the hurry and confusion, she gave ten sous to a man, who guided her to the private room of the Chief of Police.

She was received with politeness by a stout, bald personage dressed in black. She lifted her veil, and told her story frankly, without any concealments.

The gentleman listened, without interrupting her, and, when she had finished, he said, simply:

"You are this man's sister-in-law, are you?"

"Yes," answered Lisa, "we are honest people, and I do not wish my husband to be compromised."

He shrugged his shoulders and waved his hand as if this remark were very foolish. Then, with an air of impatience, he said:

"For more than a year I have known all you tell me. The man has been denounced again and again! You understand, that if I have not acted, it is because I prefer waiting. We have our reasons. I will show you—"

He laid before her a huge pile of papers. She turned them over. They were, in fact, the detached pieces of the history she had just told. The authorities of Havre, Rouen, and Vernon announced Florent's arrival. Then his installation at the Quenu-Gradelles' was noted, his entrance at the Halles, his life, his evenings spent at the Cabaret—not an incident was omitted.

Lisa noticed that the reports were double, as if they came from two different sources.

Then came a heap of anonymous letters, of all forms and styles. This was the climax. She recognized the fine scrawl of Mademoiselle Saget, denouncing the set of men who frequented the club. She saw, too, a large sheet of coarse paper with Madame Lecœur's hieroglyphics, and one shining page, a joint work of La Sarriette and Monsieur Jules. These last two letters cautioned the government against Gavard. She recognized, also, Mother Mehuden's coarse language, who, in four pages which were almost illegible, recounted all the tales which were in circulation in regard to Florent.

But she was utterly overwhelmed when she beheld one of the printed bills of the house, bearing the words: "*Charcuterie Quenu-Gradelle,*" on the back of which Auguste denounced the man, whom he regarded as the obstacle to his marriage.

She was asked if she recognized any of these handwritings.

She stammered forth the word, "No," and rose to leave. She drew down her veil to conceal her agitation and vague bewilderment. Her hands trembled as she drew up her shawl.

The bald man smiled faintly.

"You see, Madame, that you are a little late; but I assure you that we shall remember what you have done. Tell your husband not to lift a finger. Certain circumstances may occur—"

He did not conclude his sentence, but bowed slightly, and half rose from his chair. She felt herself dismissed, and went away. In the ante-room she saw Logre and Monsieur Lebigre, who hastily turned away; but she was more disturbed than they. She hurried through the corridors, feeling that there was no escape from the police, who knew and saw everything.

She went to the Quai de l' Horloge, where she walked for some little time, soothed and refreshed by the cool air from the Seine.

She felt most keenly the uselessness of the step she had taken; her husband was in no danger after all. This was of course a relief, and yet gave her a certain sense of

remorse. She was vexed with these women who had placed her in such a ridiculous position. She stood still and looked at the Seine. Some coal barges were coming toward her, from the end of which men were fishing.

It was not she, then, who had delivered Florent into the hands of the Philistines. The relief she felt at this thought astonished her. Would she have committed an infamous act in doing so?

She hesitated, and wondered if she had been deceived by her conscience. The anonymous letters seemed to her more atrocious than anything she had ever dreamed of. She had gone openly to fulfil what she believed to be her duty. She asked herself if the Gradelle money counted for anything in her decision. No; she was not avaricious. Money had nothing to do with it, and she gradually recovered her ease of mind.

"Did you get the seats?" asked Quenu, when she went into the house.

He wished to see the tickets, and explained to her precisely where they were, all of which she had ascertained before purchasing them.

This theatre project was devised by her, merely to get her husband out of the house while the police made a descent on Florent, which she supposed they would do as soon as her story was heard. She had intended asking him to go to walk in the Bois. They would dine at a restaurant, and go from thence to the theatre. On their return they would find Florent gone. Now the programme was changed, and it was not necessary to go out, until it was time for the theatre.

"I told you it did you good to go out," said Quenu. "You look as different as possible. You should take a walk every day!"

"No," she answered, coldly, "the streets of Paris are not good for the health."

That evening at the Gaieté they played the *Grâce de Dieu*. Quenu, in a black coat and pearl-colored gloves, studied the programme with great earnestness. Lisa was superb, and folded her arms on the red velvet railing. Her white gloves were too tight, and her arms bulged above them. They were both greatly moved by Marie's misfortunes. The commander was a vile man; and Pierrot made them laugh as soon as he appeared. The Charcutière wept bitterly in the pathetic scenes. The child's departure, the prayer and return of the poor mad girl, brought tears to her eyes, which she gently wiped away with her handkerchief.

This soirée was a veritable triumph to her, when, on raising her eyes, she beheld La Normande and her mother in the second gallery. She bridled, sent Quenu for a box of caramels, played with her fan—one of mother-of-pearl with considerable gilding.

This was too much for the fish-woman. She dropped her head, and seemed to be listening to her mother's whispers. When they met in the vestibule, the two women smiled coldly at each other.

Florent had dined early that day with Monsieur Lebigre. He was waiting for Logre, who was to present to him an old Sergeant, a man whom he was sure to find very useful,

and who would assist them in devising the attack against the Palais Bourbon and the Hôtel de Ville.

As night came on, a fine rain began to fall, and veiled the Halles, while the low, heavy, black clouds seemed to rest almost upon the roofs of the houses. Florent was saddened by the aspect of things, and by the rush of yellow water in the gutters.

Logre did not bring the Sergeant. Gavard had gone to dine with friends at Batignolles. Florent was reduced to passing the evening tête-à-tête with Robine. He was early wearied out, and went off to bed; but when he reached his room felt nervous and restless.

The evening before he had been at the funeral of Monsieur Valoque, who had died after long and acute sufferings. He could not forget that narrow coffin, nor poor Madame Valoque's tears. She had told him that none of the expenses of the funeral were paid, and that she had not a sou in the house. Florent paid everything, and the poor woman looked so utterly heart-broken that, as he left the house, he put into her hand twenty francs.

This death naturally established him in his position as Inspector of the markets. He was impatient for the insurrection to burst forth that he might throw aside the braided cap forever.

With all these contradictory thoughts and plans surging within him, he opened his window and stepped out on the balcony. The wind had gone down; the rain had ceased, but there were no stars in the sky.

Leaning over the railing, Florent said to himself that

sooner or later he should be punished for having accepted a position under the Government. It was a blemish on his life, and he felt that he had perjured himself by serving the Empire, after the oaths he had sworn to himself so many times while in exile. The desire of pleasing Lisa, the charitable use of his emoluments, were not strong enough arguments to excuse his weakness. His sufferings, whatever they might be, he deserved. He lived over again the last wretched year ; the persecutions of the market-women ; the nausea he had constantly felt from the atrocious smells, and the hostility which was rapidly growing about him. All these things he accepted as a chastisement. He felt a dull conviction that some catastrophe was close at hand, and bowed his head to accept it in expiation of his fault.

The rain of the afternoon had filled the Halles with dampness, which brought out all the intolerable smells. It seemed to him that from these markets enclosed under one roof, rose a thick vapor. The butchers' and tripe-merchants' stalls sent forth an odor of blood.

The vegetable and fruit-markets exhaled the acrid smell of sour cabbages, rotten apples and decayed vegetables. The butter was rancid, and the fish tainted. At his feet was the poultry-market, smelling like a stable.

He heard a gay laugh, and the sound of a door closing noisily. It was Quenu and Lisa coming home from the theatre. And Florent started, and with a shiver, went in and closed the blinds.

## CHAPTER VI.

### RING-DOVES AND PIGEONS.

ONE morning at daybreak, Florent forgot his duties at the market, and explored each street in the vicinity of the Palais Bourbon. He went as far as the Esplanade des Invalides, and measured certain distances by taking long strides. Then he went to the Quai d'Orsay, and leaning over the parapet decided that the attack should be simultaneous. The band from Gros-Caillou would arrive by the Champ de Mars; the sections from the North of Paris should sweep down by the Madeleine; those of the West and South must follow the Quais.

He looked toward the opposite shore with some anxiety: the Champs Elysées and the wide avenues were difficult to deal with. He saw, too, that cannon placed there would sweep the whole Quais. Then he changed some details of his plan, and made several alterations in the paper he held in his hand. The real attack should be made by la Rue du Bourgogne and la Rue de l'Univerable. The sun now touched his shoulders, and shone on the wide sidewalks and gilded the monuments opposite him. He saw the battle. He saw men clinging to these columns, and then far above, he beheld lean hands flinging out the flag to the breeze. He went slowly homeward.

Suddenly he heard a soft cooing sound, and realized that he was in the garden of the Tuileries, and saw the turtle-doves sunning themselves on the lawn. He leaned against a box that held a huge orange tree and looked around. The shadow of the large chestnut trees was very heavy. The air was sweet with perfume, and made him think of Madame François. A little girl ran past with her hoop, and frightened the turtle-doves. They flew away and alighted on the arm of a marble athlete in the centre of the green sward, where they pecked and plumed themselves.

As he entered the Halles, he heard the voice of Claude Lantier calling to him.

"Come with me!" said the painter. "I am looking for that little brute, Marjolin."

Florent followed him, merely to get away from himself, and to put off as long as possible, his return to his distasteful duties at the market.

Claude said that Marjolin was perfectly happy. He was a mere beast, walking on two legs instead of four; that was about all the difference.

"He may be stuffing the pigeons," said Claude. "We could go and see."

They went into the cellar, in the centre of which two fountains were playing. The houses here were devoted exclusively to pigeons. Behind the gratings there arose a plaintive sound—a perpetual rippling note.

Claude laughed, and said to his companion:

"I should think all the lovers in Paris were in this place!"

But as every one of these rooms, or houses, seemed to be locked, he came to the conclusion that Marjolin could not be in the cellar. Suddenly they heard the sound of gentle, continual kissing, and they discovered one door that was ajar. They pushed it open and beheld Cadine, with Marjolin kneeling in front of her so that his face was on a level with her lips. She was kissing him tenderly on his hair, his brow, his eyes—slowly and methodically. He complacently remained just as she placed him, and allowed her to do as she pleased. He had no longer a will of his own.

"Aren't you ashamed?" said Claude. "In this dirty place, too!"

"But," answered Cadine, with impudent effrontery, "he is afraid anywhere that is light! Is it not so, dear? You are afraid sometimes, are you not?"

He passed his hands over his face, as if seeking the kisses she had left there. He answered, with a vague smile, "Yes, that he was afraid."

"I came to help him, too," the girl added. "I am stuffing the pigeons."

Florent looked at the poor creatures. All around the place on shelves were uncovered boxes, in which pigeons were placed close against each other. Every few moments a light shiver ran through the moving mass. Cadine had a saucepan at her side full of water and grain. She filled her mouth, took up the pigeons one by one, opened their beaks, and blew this food down their throats; and they, struggling and choking, fell back into their boxes dizzy with the food thus swallowed by force.

"Poor things!" said Claude.

"They are not poor things, at all. They are very comfortable now. In two hours they will be made to swallow salted water: this makes them white and tender; and two hours after that they are bled. If you would like to see that done, you can look at Marjolin, for he has fifty to do now."

Claude and Florent followed Marjolin. He sat down on the ground by the fountain, put the box of pigeons by his side, and placed on his knees a tin case with wires across set in a wooden frame. He seized the pigeons by the wings, and, with a quick blow on the head with the handle of the knife, stunned them, and then inserted the point in the throat. The pigeons shivered, and he arranged them in rows, the heads between these iron wires, over the tin box, into which the blood dropped slowly.

He did this with the regular movement of a machine at first, but by degrees seemed to become excited—his eyes glittered and he moved quicker and quicker. He finally burst out laughing.

"Tic-tac, tic-tac, tic-tac," he sang, accompanying the noise made by the knife on the heads of the poor creatures with a movement of his tongue.

"He likes that!" said Cadine. "Pigeons are funny when they put their heads down so far between their shoulders that we can't find their necks." She laughed again as she watched Marjolin's feverish haste.

"I have tried, but I can never do it as fast as he. One day he bled a hundred in ten minutes."

Claude, happening to glance at Florent, saw him so pale that he hastily led him to the stairs, where he made him sit down.

"Well! well!" he said, "who would have thought that you could faint like a woman!"

"It was the smell," answered Florent, a little ashamed. These pigeons, who were made to swallow grain and salt water and then bled to death, had reminded him of the turtle-doves of the Tuileries, walking in their changeable satiny plumage on the turf golden with sunlight. He saw them gurgling and cooing on the arm of the antique statue in the silent garden, while, in the dark shadow of the chestnut trees, the little girl played with her hoop.

This huge, senseless brute, killing these little creatures, had chilled him to the marrow of his bones.

"You will make no kind of a soldier, my boy," said Claude. "The people who sent you to Cayenne were simple creatures to be afraid of you! Look out, my dear fellow, never to get into any trouble, for if you should fire a pistol and happen to kill any one you would faint away!"

Florent rose, but did not answer. He had become very serious, and heavy lines contracted his forehead. He went away, leaving Claude to return to the pigeons and Marjolin.

As he walked through the fish-market, he thought again of his plan of attack and of the armed bands which would invade the Palais Bourbon. In the Champs Elysées the cannon would reverberate, the windows would be broken, there would be blood and brains spattered on the columns. A rapid vision passed before his eyes. He passed his

hand over them, not daring to look. As he crossed la Rue du Pont Neuf, he thought he saw Auguste's pale face in the fruit-market.

He seemed to be waiting or watching for some one, and his eyes were wide open with a wild stare. He suddenly turned, and fled in the direction of the Charcuterie.

"What on earth is the matter?" thought Florent, "he behaves as if he were afraid of me."

Grave events had taken place that morning at the Quenu-Gradelles'. At daybreak Auguste had rushed to the room of his employers to tell them that the police had come to arrest Florent, and then added, in a confused way, that he thought Florent had got away.

La belle Lisa, in her dressing-gown, ran up-stairs and took the photograph of La belle Normande from the drawer of her brother-in-law and went down again. On the landing she met the police agent, who begged to speak to her a moment.

He bade her open her shop as usual, and to say nothing to any one. He put his men into possession of Florent's room. Thus was the trap laid and baited.

Lisa's only anxiety in this whole affair was as to how Quenu would receive this blow. She feared that he would ruin all by his tears if he should discover that the police were there; as yet he had not been disturbed, and she prepared a little tale with which to delude him when he awoke.

In another half hour she was at her door, with her hair as carefully dressed as usual—accurately dressed and smiles

on her rosy face. Auguste was arranging the shop. Quenu came out, yawned a little, and shook himself in the fresh morning air. Nothing indicated the drama that was in preparation.

But the Commissary himself was the one to awaken suspicion in the Quartier by making a domiciliary visit to the Mehudens. He was furnished with the most accurate information. In the anonymous letters received at the Préfecture it was said that La belle Normande was the mistress of Florent. She, therefore, had probably sheltered and concealed him now.

The Commissary, accompanied by two men, shook the door and demanded admittance in the name of the Law. The Mehudens were hardly up. The old woman opened the door in a rage, which was suddenly calmed when she understood what the demand meant.

She took a seat, and calmly fastened her clothing, while she said:

"You can look where you choose, gentlemen; we are honest people, and have nothing to fear!"

As La Normande did not see fit to open her door, the Commissary ordered it to be forced. She was dressing, and her shoulders were bare. This brutal entrance exasperated her. The skirt that she was just throwing over her head dropped from her hands, and she rushed forward red with anger rather than shame.

The Commissary, faced by this half-naked woman, advanced in front of his men, saying, in a cold, stern voice: "In the Name of the Law! In the Name of the Law!"

She fell into a chair, weeping and sobbing. Her hair streamed over her shoulders. Her chemise did not reach her knees. The men looked away, while the Commissary caught up a shawl and threw it over her, but she did not notice it. She wept hysterically as she saw these men open her wardrobe and look under her bed.

"What have I done?" she gasped. "What are you looking for here?"

The Commissary uttered Florent's name just as Mother Mehuden entered the room.

"Ah! wretch!" cried her daughter, rushing toward her.

One of the men caught her and wrapped her in the shawl. She struggled, and said:

"For what do you take me, then? This Florent never crossed this threshold. Put me in prison, if you choose. What do I care for this Florent? I can marry a better man than he, any day."

This flood of words calmed her. Her fury now turned against Florent, who was the cause of this insult. She addressed the Commissary, and tried to justify herself.

"I did not know, sir—he was very quiet and very gentle; and he deceived us all. I did not want to listen to the people who abused him. He came to give my little boy lessons, for which I tried to pay by an occasional present of a fine fish. And this is all."

"But where are the papers he gave you to take care of?"

"Papers! He never gave me any papers. If he had, I would give them to you—I swear I would, rather than

see you rummage among all my things in this way. I tell you it is not worth while for you to look."

The men, having completed their search in her room, now opened a door leading to the closet where Much slept. In a moment the child was heard crying aloud. Awakened from a deep sleep, he apparently thought he was about to be murdered.

La Normande called to him, and he ran to her and clung about her neck. She consoled him, and placed him in her own bed. The men were about to leave, when the child said, in a whisper:

"Don't let them take my copy-books."

"To be sure! Your copy-books!" cried La Normande. "Wait a moment, gentlemen; I have something for you. You will see plenty of his writing, now; and if you wish to hang him, do so. I won't cut the rope."

She handed them the copy-books, which utterly infuriated the child, who began to kick and scratch his mother, who was trying to hold him. Finding that he could not get away, he began to bellow.

Mademoiselle Saget stuck in her head—she had come, finding the doors all open—saying that she really pitied these poor ladies who had no one to defend them.

In the meantime the Commissary was reading the copies set by Florent, with a heavy frown. He gave a little tap to the paper.

"This is very serious," he said, "very serious, indeed!"

He handed the bundle of copy-books to one of his men and departed.

Claire, who had not appeared, now opened her door and looked at the men as they went down-stairs. She then entered her sister's room, where she had not been for a year.

Mademoiselle Saget was fluttering about La belle Normande, caressing her, and wrapping the shawl more closely about her.

"You are a mean coward!" said Claire, planting herself before her sister, who started up, the shawl again falling to the floor.

"You were listening, were you? Say that again, if you dare!"

"You are a mean coward!" repeated the girl, in a tone that was even more insulting.

Then La Normande rushed forward and slapped Claire's pale face, who, frail as she was, grasped her sister by the throat. They struggled for a moment, tearing out each other's hair. The younger, with superhuman force, pushed the other against the wardrobe, the glass of which shivered. Much sobbed, and Mother Mehuden shrieked to Mademoiselle Saget to separate them; but Claire shook herself free.

"Mean coward that you are!" she repeated. "I am now going to warn the man you have sold!"

Her mother threw herself across the door, and La Normande, with the assistance of the little old maid, hustled Claire into her room, whose door they locked. There was a dead silence, and then a dull, grating sound.

"She is trying to take off the hinges with her scissors,"

said La Normande, contemptuously, as she went about trying to find her clothes, which had been somewhat scattered in the mêlée.

"She would have killed me without any hesitation," said La Normande, "if she could; and now she must be kept in her room, or she will make the most fearful row in the Quartier."

Mademoiselle Saget was naturally in great haste to depart. She reached the corner of la Rue Pirouette just as the Commissary and his men went into the charcuterie. She followed in such a state of excitement that Lisa made a sign to her to be quiet, with a glance at Quenu. When he went into the kitchen, the old maid told what had taken place at the Mehudens'. Lisa listened with an air of triumph; but when a customer asked for two pigs' feet, she wrapped them up thoughtfully, as she said:

"Look here: to show you that I have no enmity against La Normande, you may tell her that I have saved this from the police, and am ready to give it back to her, if she comes and asks me for it."

She took the photograph from her pocket. Mademoiselle Saget looked at it, and read aloud:

"Louise to her good friend Florent."

Then in a significant tone she said:

"You make a mistake. You should keep this."

"No," answered Lisa; "I wish this affair to be ended, once for all. To-day is the day for a reconciliation, and after this I hope the Quartier will settle down."

"Do you want me to tell La belle Normande that you would like to see her?"

"Yes; if you would be so kind."

Mademoiselle Saget returned to la Rue Pirouette, and frightened the fish-woman out of her senses by telling her that her picture was in Lisa's pocket. But she could not at once decide to make the concession demanded by her rival. She, too, had her conditions to make. She would go, if the Charcutière would come to the door to receive her. The old maid was obliged to make two more trips between the rivals in order to make the arrangement satisfactory to both parties. Mademoiselle Saget was quite willing to take this trouble, as she was to be credited with the reconciliation which would, of course, cause such excitement in the Quartier. As she passed Claire's door she still heard the noise of the scissors.

As soon as these points were settled, she went off in a hurry to get Madame Lecœur and La Sarriette. They established themselves nearly opposite the Charcuterie, where they could see the entire interview. The three women became very impatient as they waited there. The story had got abroad in the Halles, and every one was on the *qui vive;* while all eyes were turned toward the shop of the Quenu-Gradelles; and when La Normande appeared, they held their breath.

"Look at her ear-rings," said La Sarriette.

"Just see how she walks," exclaimed Madame Lecœur. "It is for all the world like a peacock."

La belle Normande, in fact, held herself like a queen who condescends to sign a treaty of peace. She had made a most careful toilette, and had turned up a corner of her

crisp white apron to show her black cashmere skirt. At her throat was a gorgeous tie of lace.

As she felt that the whole Halles were looking at her, she carried her head still higher. She stopped at the door of the Charcuterie.

"Now it is the turn of La belle Lisa," said Mademoiselle Saget.

Lisa left her counter with smiling grace. She crossed her shop with a leisurely step, and extended her hand to La belle Normande. She was carefully dressed: her collar, apron and cuffs of immaculate purity.

The two women disappeared within the shop, and the spectators could exchange remarks, as it was no use to try and hear.

"She is buying something," said Mademoiselle Saget. "La belle Normande is certainly buying something—and look! Lisa is giving her the photograph!"

Then followed more salutations, and La belle Lisa accompanied her fair rival to the very sidewalk. There they stood and talked for a good five minutes for the edification of the Quartier, who felt that the quarrel was happily concluded. But Mademoiselle Saget would not allow her two companions to leave her. The crowning act of the drama was near at hand.

"And now La belle Normande has no lover," said Madame Lecœur.

"She has Monsieur Lebigre," remarked La Sarriette, laughing.

"Oh! Monsieur Lebigre; he won't have her now!"

Mademoiselle Saget shrugged her shoulders, murmuring:

"You know nothing about it. He won't trouble himself much about this affair. La Normande is rich, and in two months they will be man and wife. You will see. Mother Mehuden has done her best to bring this marriage about for a long time."

"But," said Madame Lecœur, "after all, there has nothing wrong been found out. Florent was not in her room."

"Not then," answered the old maid, significantly, "but that does not prove that he has not been there. I believe myself that he had just gone. The worst of the whole thing was," she continued, "the horrible things these men said before little Much. Now I don't mean that the child amounts to much, but that is no reason why the police should be allowed to frighten him out of his senses. But look! there is poor Monsieur Quenu, and he is laughing!"

Quenu, in fact, was standing on the sidewalk in his white apron, talking with Madame Taboureau's little servant. He was in the best of spirits that morning, and Lisa had the greatest difficulty in the world in keeping him in the kitchen. She walked up and down the shop impatiently, fearing that Florent would come in, and that her husband would be there.

"She is in a fever!" said Mademoiselle Saget. "Her poor husband knows nothing about it all. Just see him laugh, now! You know that Madame Taboureau said

she should quarrel with the Quenus if they were so weak-minded as to keep Florent with them any longer."

"And in the meantime they have all the money," said Madame Lecœur.

"By no means, my dear; he has had his share."

"Is that really so? Do you know it?"

"I know it," answered the old maid; but she did not say how. "He has even had more than he is entitled to. Ah! a profligate man makes the money fly! And then, you know, there is another woman—"

"I did not know it," answered La Sarriette, "but I am not surprised."

"Yes; the wife of the former Inspector, Madame Valoque."

The others exclaimed at this; Madame Valoque was so ugly.

"But I know it," continued Mademoiselle Saget. "There are proofs—piles of letters from that woman, letters asking him for money—and I believe that they two killed the husband."

La Sarriette and Madame Lecœur were convinced, of course, but they were tired of waiting. They said to each other that their stalls were left alone, and were probably robbed by this time, but Mademoiselle Saget begged them to stay a moment longer, all the time keeping her own eyes riveted on the house, whose front was bathed in the morning sun.

"Who would think that it was full of police?" murmured Madame Lecœur.

"They are in the attic. Look! I can see one now behind those plants on the terrace."

The others extended their necks, but could see nothing.

"No, I was mistaken. It was a shadow," explained La Sarriette. "They must be sitting still in the room."

At this moment they saw Gavard come out of the fish-market, with a preoccupied air. He was coming toward them.

"Have you seen Florent?" he asked, as he reached them.

They did not reply.

"I want to see him at once," continued Gavard. "He is not in the fish-market. Has he gone in?"

The three women were all unnaturally pale, and their lips trembled.

Madame Lecœur was the first to speak:

"We have been here only a few moments," she said. "He may have gone in."

"Then I will undertake those five flights of stairs," answered Gavard, laughing.

La Sarriette opened her lips as if to warn him, but her Aunt held her arm tightly.

"Let him go!" she whispered, "and he may, perhaps, learn not to walk over us another time."

La Sarriette stood still, with a flushed face, but the others were yellow-white. They looked at the house as if they could see Gavard through the stones as he ascended the stairs.

La Sarriette uttered a nervous little laugh when she

thought her Uncle had had time to reach Florent's room. They fancied that they saw the curtains move. Fifteen minutes elapsed and all was quiet. Then a man came out of the alley and went for a fiacre. In another five minutes Gavard came down with two men.

Gavard was very pale. He had been searched and his pistol and box of cartridges taken from him. He thought himself lost, and was surprised that the idea of this dénouement had never entered his head. The Tuileries would never forgive him. His limbs felt strangely weak, but he held himself straight, determined that the Halles should see that he died bravely.

Madame Lecœur and La Sarriette rushed to his side, and begged for an explanation. He took his niece in his arms, and, as he kissed her, murmured in her ear, as he gave her a key: "Burn all my papers."

He entered the fiacre with the air of a man ascending the scaffold.

When the carriage disappeared around the corner, Madame Lecœur saw her niece trying to hide the key.

"You need not take so much trouble," she said, between her teeth, "I saw him put it in your hand. As true as there is a God in Heaven, I will go before the Préfect and declare the truth unless you share with me."

"But, my dear Aunt," answered La Sarriette, with an embarrassed smile, "let us go at once, before those thieves get there."

Mademoiselle Saget, who had heard all this, followed their fleet steps as quickly as she could. As they neared

Gavard's home she offered to go on and explain to Madame Léonce the reason of their coming.

"We will see to it ourselves," said Madame Lecœur, stiffly.

The housekeeper was by no means willing to show these ladies up-stairs. She looked austerely at La Sarriette's untidy fichu. But when Mademoiselle Saget said a few words in a low voice, and showed her the key, she yielded.

"Take everything," she said, throwing herself into a chair, as if abandoning all hope.

La Sarriette tried the key in all the wardrobes, while Madame Lecœur watched her closely, and stood so near to her that finally she exclaimed:

"Please stand a little farther off, Aunt; I can't use my arms."

At last a wardrobe opposite the window was opened. The four women uttered a simultaneous exclamation. On the centre shelf were ten thousand francs, in methodical little piles. Gavard, whose property was prudently deposited in the hands of a notary, kept this sum in reserve, ready for an emergency. He looked on them as aid to the insurrection, and dreamed at night that a battle was going on within his wardrobe. He heard the beat of drums, the rattling of musketry and triumphant shouts—it was his money which did all this.

La Sarriette uttered a little shriek of joy, and extended her hands.

"Paws off! my dear," exclaimed Madame Lecœur, in a hoarse voice.

The woman was slowly dying of an affection of the liver, but her skin turned yellower than ever, and seemed to reflect the gold which lay before her. Peering over her shoulder was Mademoiselle Saget, standing on the points of her toes in an ecstasy of delight.

"My Uncle told me to take everything," said La Sarriette.

"And am I, who have watched over him in sickness and in health, to have nothing?" asked the housekeeper.

Madame Lecœur pushed them all away and planting herself before the wardrobe she said:

"I am his nearest relative, and you are robbers! all of you!" she added, with some violence.

There was a long and profound silence. The four women looked at each other. La Sarriette, palpitating with life, youth, and hope, offered a strange contrast to the other women.

"But," continued Madame Lecœur, "we do not wish to quarrel about it. You are his niece—his only niece—and we will divide. We will each of us take a pile in turn."

She bade the other two step back, and she began. She took one pile which disappeared among her skirts. Then La Sarriette did the same. Then the two hands laid side by side on the shelf—one with horrible, distorted fingers, the other white, delicate and supple as silk.

There was one pile left, which the Aunt claimed; but La Sarriette disputed this, as it was her Aunt who commenced the division, and she divided it between Madame

Léonce, who had seen them pocket the gold with gasps of horror, and Mademoiselle Saget.

"Bless my soul!" said the housekeeper, "fifty francs for taking care of that old man all this time! He said he had no family, the old cheat!"

Madame Lecœur, before closing the wardrobe, wished to search it thoroughly. It contained all the political books which were not allowed to cross the frontiers: pamphlets from Brussels; scandalous tales of the Bonapartes; and caricatures of the Emperor. One of Gavard's greatest delights had been to shut himself up, and show a friend these compromising papers.

"He begged us to burn these papers," said La Sarriette.

"Nonsense! There is no fire, and we had best be off."

Hardly had they reached the foot of the stairs than the police appeared. Madame Léonce went back to show them to Gavard's rooms. The others pursued their way, the aunt and niece somewhat incommoded by the weight of their full pockets, but enjoying them all the same.

Mademoiselle Saget held her fifty francs tight in her hand, all the time revolving a plan for obtaining something more from out those full pockets.

"There is Florent!" she exclaimed, as they neared the fish-market.

Florent it was, indeed. He was going to his office to change his coat, having completed his daily task. It seemed to him that people looked at him strangely. He wondered if there were any new trouble in store for him.

But, as he passed the Mehudens' stall, he was surprised to hear the old woman say, in a gentle voice:

"Monsieur Florent, there was a gentleman looking for you. I think he has gone to your room, to wait for you there."

The old fish-woman, sitting in her stall, enjoyed, as she uttered these words, a refinement of vengeance which shook her enormous frame with joy. Florent looked questioningly at La belle Normande, who, now on the best of terms with her mother, was bustling about, and pretended not to hear.

"You are sure?" he asked.

"Oh! certainly. One couldn't be surer!" she answered, in a sharp voice.

Florent thought that this gentleman had come in relation to the great affair.

He was about leaving the market when, as he turned, he caught sight of La belle Normande, who was watching him with a very grave face. He passed the three women.

"You notice," murmured Mademoiselle Saget, "that there is no one in the shop. La belle Lisa is not the woman to compromise herself."

It was true: the Charcuterie was empty. The house lay basking in the sunlight with a comfortable sort of air. The flowers were blooming gayly, high up on the balcony, and as Florent crossed the sidewalk he nodded to Logre and to Monsieur Lebigre, who were standing at the door of the wine-shop.

These gentlemen smiled in a friendly sort of way. He was about to enter the narrow alley when he perceived Auguste's pale face flash through the darkness. He turned back and looked into the shop, but saw only Monton, who glared at him out of his large yellow eyes; his whiskers had a fiercer aspect than usual.

When he finally entered the alley, he saw La belle Lisa watching him from behind the curtain of a glass-door. Profound silence reigned in the fish-market; every eye was fixed on that house.

Suddenly a laugh ran around the Halles. Mother Mehuden's story of the gentleman waiting to see Florent struck them as a capital joke. At last "the skeleton"—Mother Mehuden's favorite name for the Inspector—was caught, and they wished him *bon voyage*, hoping devoutly that his successor was better-looking.

La belle Normande looked on at this joy, and had great difficulty in restraining her tears.

Meanwhile Florent had gone up to his room, where he allowed himself to be taken without the smallest resistance, which he saw would be utterly useless. He took a chair and looked at the men, as they turned over the papers and opened all the packages of scarfs and badges. This dénouement was, after all, no surprise to him, and was, in fact, rather a relief, although he would not have confessed even to himself that such was the case. His keenest sufferings were caused by the remembrance of the hatred which had pushed him into this room. He

recalled Auguste's pale face, and the whispers of the fish-women; he remembered Mother Mehuden's words; the silence of La Normande, and the vacant shop; and said to himself, that all these people were accomplices, and that the Quartier had delivered him up.

Among this crowd of faces, which he saw as he sat with his hands pressed over his eyes, suddenly appeared Quenu's pale face. He was cut to the heart.

"Come on!" said the police agent, roughly.

He rose and went down with the men. On the next floor he asked to be allowed to go back for something he had forgotten, but the man pushed him on. He offered them money even, and finally two agreed to go back with him, swearing they would break his head if he played them any trick. They took their revolvers from their pockets. He returned to his room, went to the cage, and took out the bird, kissed it on its glossy head, and let it fly. He watched as it lighted on the roof of the fish-market, and then was off again, disappearing over the Halles.

He looked out toward the sky, and thought of the doves in the garden of the Tuileries, and then of the pigeons quivering in Marjolin's hands. He bowed his head and followed the men, who shrugged their shoulders, and put their revolvers in their pockets.

At the foot of the stairs Florent stopped before the door which opened on the kitchen of the Charcuterie. The Commissary, who was waiting there, was touched by his submissiveness, and said:

"Do you wish to bid your brother good-bye?"

He hesitated a moment. He looked at the door, from behind which came a deafening noise of choppers and mallets.

Lisa, to occupy her husband, had suggested making the pudding, which was usually done in the evening. Onions were frying on the fire. Florent heard Quenu say:

"Zounds! this pudding will be good!"

Florent thanked the Commissary, but was afraid to go into that hot kitchen, full of the smell of cooking. He passed the door, strong in the belief that his brother knew nothing, and hastening his steps to avoid giving him an additional sorrow. As he entered the fiacre, he felt ashamed to know that all the fish-women were triumphing over him.

"How guilty he looks!" whispered Madame Lecœur.

"Yes," added Mademoiselle Saget; "he has the air of a convict!"

"I once saw a man guillotined," murmured La Sarriette, "who had just that expression."

They stretched out their necks to look into the fiacre.

Just at it drove off, the old maid pulled the skirts of her companions to call their attention to Claire, who was running toward them with flying hair and bleeding hands.

She had torn open her door. When she understood that she was too late, she shook her fist at the fiacre with impotent rage, then rushed away as swiftly as she had

come, the plaster rising in fine clouds from her garments as she moved.

"He must have promised to marry her," cried La Sarriette, laughing.

The Quartier now calmed down, though groups still passed the windows of the Charcuterie, looking in curiously. Lisa did not appear at the counter. She left Augustine to attend to all the duties there. She intended to tell all to Quenu that afternoon, lest some chatterbox should disclose the truth too abruptly. She wanted to be alone with him in the kitchen, knowing that he would burst into tears and make a terrible scene.

She, therefore, proceeded with much care; but, as soon as he understood it, he dropped upon the chopping-block and sobbed like a child.

"Poor, dear boy!" said Lisa, smoothing his arm, "you must not go on like this; you will hurt yourself."

His sobs subsided, and, when he could speak, he said:

"You can never know how good he was to me when we were living in la Rue Royer-Collard. He did everything there—he swept and cooked. He loved me as if I were his own child. He worked like a dog, and came home tired to death, and I had all I wanted to eat and was warm and lazy. And now they will shoot him!"

Lisa exclaimed at this, and told him that Florent would not be shot—that was ridiculous.

He shook his head, and continued:

"No, I never loved him half enough. I was selfish and mean, and I wanted to keep his money—"

"But I offered it to him twenty times," she interrupted. "We have nothing to reproach ourselves with."

"I know that you have always been goodness itself to him, but I have been selfish, and I believe if I had shared everything with him, that he would not have turned out badly a second time. It is all my own fault!"

She was very gentle with him. She even expressed sympathy for Florent. He was guilty, certainly, and if he had had more money he might not have committed so many follies; and, by degrees, she hazarded the opinion that perhaps it was better as it was.

Quenu wiped his eyes and ceased sobbing, that he might hear what she said, and at last put his hand mechanically on his chopping-knife.

"You have not been well," said Lisa, "nor have I, and I was really very anxious about you. And the shop, too, has been a very different place."

"Yes, indeed," sobbed Quenu.

"And you must remember," added Lisa, "that you have a wife and a child to think of. You have duties to fulfil toward us."

He smiled faintly—Lisa had done wonders. She called Pauline, who was playing in the shop, placed her on her father's knees, and said:

"Pauline, ask your father to be good, and not make us miserable."

The child did as she was told. The two looked at each other and then at their child, and they smiled, with a sense

of relief that they were once more by themselves, while the Charcutière repeated two or three times:

"There are only three of us, dear; only three of us."

Two months later, Florent was condemned again to exile. The affair made a great noise. The journals got hold of all the details, gave portraits of the accused, and drawings of the scarfs and rosettes, and the names of the places where the bands were to meet.

All Paris discoursed for a week on the "Conspiracy of the Halles." The police looked the personification of mystery and importance. It was generally believed that the whole of the Quartier was undermined. At the Corps Legislatif the excitement was so great that the Centre and the Right forgot the untoward law of endowment which had momentarily divided them, and became reconciled, voting, by an overpowering majority, for the imposition of an unpopular tax, of which the Faubourgs dared not complain, so great was the panic in the city.

Florent was considerably amazed at the exaggerated number of accomplices which were given to him, and the trial lasted a week. Logre was acquitted, as was Lacaille. Alexandre was given two years in prison, and Gavard, like Florent, was condemned to transportation. This was a terrible blow to the old man, who was thus made to pay dearly, for what he regarded more as a frolic than anything else, and the tears streamed down the frightened face of this white-haired gamin.

One morning in August, just as the markets were

beginning to be astir, Claude Lantier went to Madame François, who sat with a sad face among her vegetables. The painter was very quiet, notwithstanding the golden sun that lay on the green velvet of the cabbages by her side.

"Well!" he said, "it is all over. They are sending him away. He is far on his way to Brest by this time."

The market-woman made a gesture of profound despair. She waved her hands and said:

"It is Paris—this horrible Paris!"

"No, Madame," answered Claude, "it is all these wretched people. You have no idea of the falsehoods they told in court, nor of the follies they committed. Will you believe that they even brought forward the child's writing-books?"

Claude clenched his fists. He was seized with a nervous shiver and pulled his coat up.

"Never was there a more gentle soul," he said. "I once saw him turn pale at seeing a pigeon killed. I absolutely laughed with pity when I saw him between the two gendarmes. I loved him because he was good and honorable. We shall never see him again!"

"He ought to have listened to me," said the market-woman. "He should have come to Nanterre and lived there with me and my rabbits. He liked me and I loved him because I knew that I could trust him. Ah, me! Come and see me some morning, Monsieur Claude. I will make an omelette for you. It is a pity, and he might have been so happy!"

Tears filled her eyes. She rose to her feet, with the air of a woman who is determined to shake off all her troubles.

"Here comes Mother Chantemesse after her turnips," she said.

Claude sauntered off. The markets were beginning to look very gay. He saw La Sarriette, with a gold watch stuck in her belt, busy with her prunes and strawberries, stopping from time to time to pull the whiskers of her friend Jules, who wore a new short velvet coat. He saw Madame Lecœur and Mademoiselle Saget—less yellow than they used to be—laughing immoderately at some story the old maid was telling.

In the fish-market, Mother Mehuden, who had resumed her stall, reigned triumphant over the new Inspector, a very young man; while Claire languidly placed in her tank a quantity of shining whitings.

At the tripe-stall Auguste and Augustine were whispering over the pigs' feet they were buying, with that unmistakable air of newly-married people.

As he walked past the Charcuterie, Much and Pauline were playing horse in front of the shop door. Much was on all-fours, while Pauline, seated on his back, clutched at his hair to preserve her balance. On the roof of the Halles he saw two shadows: they were those of Cadine and Marjolin kissing each other.

Claude said to himself, with a sardonic smile, that it was the old story—the Fat people had, as usual, triumphed;

here they all were, hearty and well, and Florent pushed to the wall.

As he stood facing la Rue Pirouette, the spectacle on his right and his left, put the finishing touch to his exasperation.

On the right side of the street, La belle Normande, or, as she was now called, La belle Madame Lebigre, stood at the door of her shop. Her husband had obtained permission to add to his wine-shop, a counter for the sale of tobacco. This had been a favorite dream of his, now gratified for sundry mysterious services rendered. Madame Lebigre was really superb, in her silk dress and crimped hair, arrayed in all this glory to take her seat at the counter, where the gentlemen of the Quartier, came to buy their cigars and packages of tobacco. She looked quite the lady, and everything was new and shining about her.

Opposite, La belle Lisa occupied the entire width of her door. Never had her linen been so immaculate; never had her face worn a more peaceful aspect, framed as it was by her shining hair. She seemed to be too tranquilly happy even to smile.

She was the personification of absolute contentment; her dimpled hands were half hidden in her apron; they were not even extended to receive the happiness of the day, so sure was she that it would come to her.

The shop, too, had resumed its former air of gayety. The tongues and the sausages no longer had that disconsolate air which so disturbed Quenu.

From the kitchen came a gay, resounding laugh, accompanied by a rattling of saucepans; and all about the shop indicated that the unfortunate episode of Florent's sojourn was totally forgotten. The two women leaned forward, and exchanged a cordial greeting; and Claude, who perhaps had not dined the previous evening, was filled with rage at seeing them so prosperous and comfortable. He drew his belt tighter and said, angrily:

"What scoundrels honest men can be!"

THE END.

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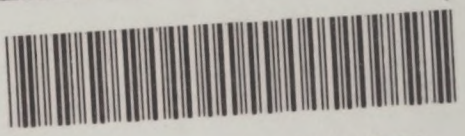

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